

UK Patent Application (12) GB (11) 2 328 131 (13) A

(43) Date of Printing by UK Office 10.02.1999

(21) Application No 9823888.4

(22) Date of Filing 25.04.1997

(30) Priority Data

(31) 60017066	(32) 30.04.1996	(33) US
(31) 60017078	(32) 30.04.1996	
(31) 60018596	(32) 30.04.1996	
(31) 60017069	(32) 01.05.1996	
(31) 08664652	(32) 17.06.1996	

(86) International Application Data
PCT/US97/07021 En 25.04.1997

(87) International Publication Data
WO97/41505 En 06.11.1997

(51) INT CL⁶
G06F 3/00

(52) UK CL (Edition Q)
H4T TBLA TBLM T122 T130 T143 T150

(56) Documents Cited by ISA
US 5485197 A US 5303388 A US 5295243 A
MICROSOFT WINDOWS FOR WORKGROUPS V3.11,
MICROSOFT CORP., 1993, SCREEN DUMPS 1-4

(58) Field of Search by ISA
US: 395/355, 348, 349; Electronic data base APS

(72) Inventor(s)
Takashi Sugiyama
Brian Bakoglu
Hiroaki Nakano
George Cossey

(71) Applicant(s)

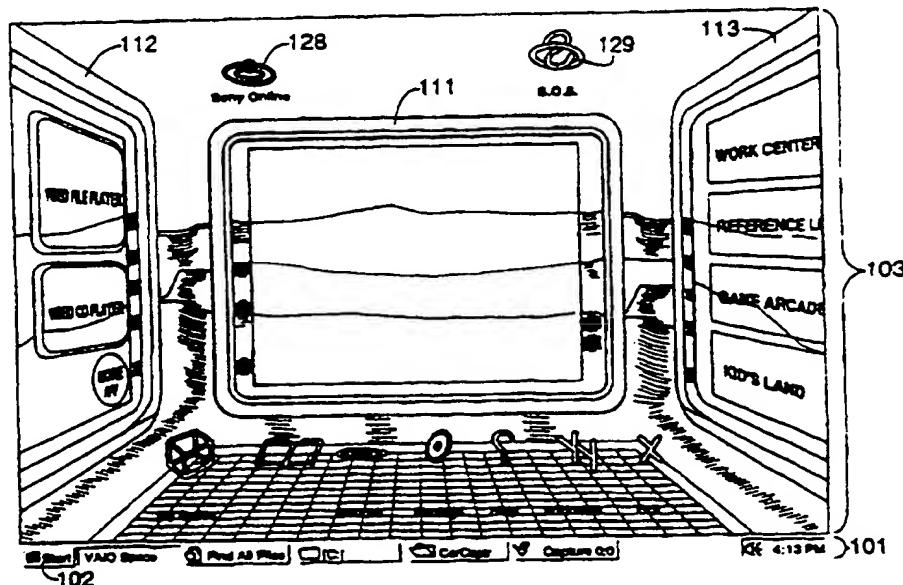
Sony Electronics Inc.
(Incorporated in USA - Delaware)
One Sony Drive, Park Ridge, New Jersey 07656-8003,
United States of America

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
D Young & Co
21 New Fetter Lane, LONDON, EC4A 1DA,
United Kingdom

(54) Abstract Title

Display control method and apparatus

(57) A graphical user interface (103) which displays an icon (128, 129) on the display. The icon (128, 129) is selectable by a user to carry out a corresponding function. The icon (128, 129) is displayed as if it is rotating and having its shadow in three dimensions (103).



GB 2 328 131 A

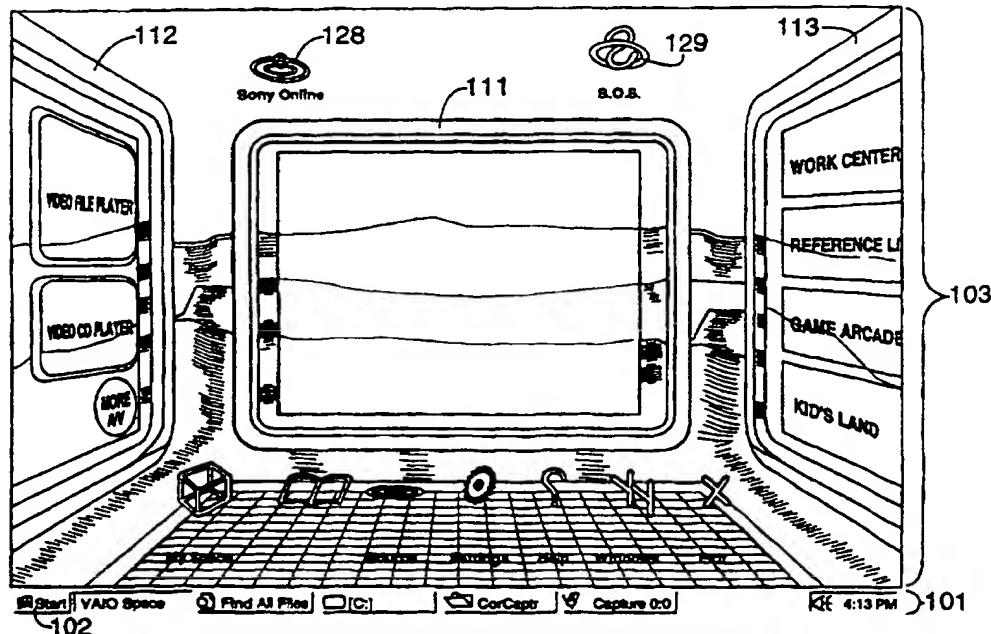
THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : G06F 3/00		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 97/41505
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US97/07021		(43) International Publication Date: 6 November 1997 (06.11.97)	
(22) International Filing Date: 25 April 1997 (25.04.97)		(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, GH, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ARIPO patent (GH, KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).	
(30) Priority Data: 60/017,066 30 April 1996 (30.04.96) US 60/017,078 30 April 1996 (30.04.96) US 60/018,596 30 April 1996 (30.04.96) US 60/017,069 1 May 1996 (01.05.96) US 08/664,652 17 June 1996 (17.06.96) US			
(71) Applicant: SONY ELECTRONICS INC. [US/US]; 1 Sony Drive, Park Ridge, NJ 07656 (US).		(72) Inventors: SUGIYAMA, Takashi; 411 Ives Terrace, Sunnyvale, CA 94087 (US). BAKOGLU, Brian; 797 Anacapa Court, Milpitas, CA 95035 (US). NAKANO, Hiroaki; 2001 California Street #604, San Francisco, CA 94109 (US). COSSEY, George; 2926 Glen Darby Court, San Jose, CA 95146 (US).	Published <i>With international search report.</i>
(74) Agents: MILLER, Jerry, A. et al.; 1 Sony Drive, MD T1-1, Park Ridge, NJ 07656 (US).			

(54) Title: DISPLAY CONTROL METHOD AND APPARATUS



(57) Abstract

A graphical user interface (103) which displays an icon (128, 129) on the display. The icon (128, 129) is selectable by a user to carry out a corresponding function. The icon (128, 129) is displayed as if it is rotating and having its shadow in three dimensions (103).

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

5

10

DISPLAY CONTROL METHOD AND APPARATUS

15

[CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION]

This application claims the benefit of

(1) U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/017,066, filed on April 30, 1996, entitled "USER INTERFACE FOR NAVIGATING AMONG,

20 ORGANIZING AND EXECUTING PROGRAMS, FILES AND DATA IN A . . . ", Attorney Docket Number 50K1439,

(2) U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/017,069, filed on April 30, 1996, entitled "DISPLAY CONTROL METHOD AND APPARATUS ", Attorney Docket Number 50K1440,

25 (3) U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/017,078, filed on April 30, 1996, entitled "DISPLAY CONTROL METHOD AND

APPARATUS", Attorney Docket Number 50K1441, and

(4) U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/----, filed on April 30, 1996, entitled " DISPLAY CONTROL METHOD AND APPARATUS", Attorney Docket Number 50K1442, all of which are
5 hereby incorporated by reference.

[BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION]

This invention relates to a graphical user interface and more particularly, relates to a graphical user interface wherein a desired command can be quickly and certainly input.

10 Recently, as a computer has higher capability, there has become popular a graphical user interface (GUI) which displays graphical images (so-called icons) corresponding to functions and/or programs to be executed. The GUI enables a user to point a desired icon by using a pointing device such as a
15 mouse, so that a desired program is selected and executed. Therefore, the user need not memorize commands to execute a program and even a beginner user has become able to operate a computer easily.

20 Among the most generally used GUI currently, there is known a multi-window system for providing plural independent display areas (windows) in a two-dimensional display. For example, WINDOWS (trademark) by Microsoft Corp. is an example of such a system. In this multi-window system, a window called a folder is provided for each category and each icon is
25 displayed in a folder of the corresponding category. However, Icons are displayed in a window which is often a simple plane

with monotone color. Therefore, the user can easily recognize that there are icons. However, such a monotone color window lacks variety so that it cannot give a vivid impression to the user.

5 [SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION]

This invention is made in light of this situation and provides a new type of three-dimensional graphical user interface which enables the user to intuitively recognize menus arranged in the three-dimensional space so that the user 10 can quickly and certainly input a command by using the menu.

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a graphical user interface which displays a background image on a display and displays a three-dimensional icon on the display. The icon is selectable by a user to 15 carry out a corresponding function. The icon is displayed as if it is rotating and having its shadow thereunder.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a graphical user interface displays a menu image on 20 a display in different arrangements in accordance with the mode selected by the user, displays plural three-dimensional icons at fixed positions on the display regardless of the mode selected by the user. The three-dimensional icons are displayed as if they are rotating at the fixed positions on 25 the display.

[BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE DRAWINGS]

Fig. 1 is a perspective drawing for showing an example of a personal computer system to which a graphical user interface according to the present invention applies.

5 Fig. 2 is a block diagram for showing an example of internal construction of main body 31 shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a drawing for explaining transitions of display screens of display 51 shown in Fig. 1.

Figs. 4A and 4B show a display example in the Video mode.

Fig. 5 shows a display example in the A/V mode.

10 Figs. 6A and 6B show a display example in the Application mode.

Fig. 7 shows another display example in the Application mode.

Fig. 8 shows another display example in the Video mode.

15 Fig. 9 shows another display example in the A/V mode.

Fig. 10 shows a display example in the Net Space mode.

Fig. 11 shows a display example when the WAV player button shown in Fig. 5 is operated.

20 Fig. 12 shows a display example when the Game Arcade button shown in Fig. 6A is operated.

Fig. 13 shows a display example when an Add Application button shown in Fig. 12 is operated.

Figs. 14A and 14B show a display example when a Quick Start Setting icon shown in Figs. 4A and 4B is operated.

25 Fig. 15 is a drawing for explaining bit map data for indicating a rotating condition of an icon.

Fig. 16 is a flow-chart for explaining an operation of the embodiment shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 17 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

Fig. 18 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

5 Fig. 19 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

Fig. 20 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

Fig. 21 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

Fig. 22 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens.

Fig. 23 shows another display example of Walls.

10 Fig. 24 is a drawing for explaining imaginary screens when a background image changes.

[DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS]

Fig. 1 shows a construction of a personal computer system to which a graphical user interface according to the present invention applies. As shown in Fig. 1, the personal computer system has main body 31, keyboard 21 and mouse 22 operable to input a command to main body 31, and display 51 for displaying an image.

20 Main body 31 has a dimension of 225 mm width, 373 mm height and 430 mm depth. At the corners between the front face and the two side faces of main body 31, there are provided with tapered faces 32 and 33 so that the width of main body 31 looks narrow. On the upper portion of one tapered face 32 of the two, there is provided with power 25 switch 34 operable to turn on/off a power supply to main body 31. On the top face of main body 31, there are provided with

four recesses 35 at locations corresponding to legs of a peripheral device so that when the peripheral device is placed on main body 31 the legs of the peripheral device are stably arranged on the top face of main body 31.

5 On the front face of main body 31, lower panel 36 and upper panel 37 are provided. Lower panel 36 is forced to protrude outward by a spring (not shown). The user can push lower panel 36 against the force of the spring so as to make lower panel 36 depressed toward main body 31. Upper panel 37 10 is guided by left and right guides 45 to be slid able upward and downward. The downward movement of upper panel 37 is restricted when lower panel 36 is protruding.

When the user wants to use the computer system, he pushes lower panel 36 toward main body 31 against the force of the 15 spring to make lower panel 36 depressed. Then, the restriction of the downward movement of upper panel 37 is removed so that upper panel 37 can move downward along guides 45. Consequently, as shown in Fig. 1, FD (floppy disk) drive 41 and CD-ROM drive 42 which are built in main body 31 become 20 exposed and available to the user. In addition, main body 31 is provided with two expansion slots 43 and 44 so that other devices can be attached thereto.

When the user stops using it, he puts his fingers on recess 38 provided on the upper portion of upper panel 37 and 25 moves upper panel 37 upward. When upper panel 37 has moved upward to a certain position along guides 45, lower panel 36

comes to protrude outward in accordance with the force of the spring and restricts the downward movement of upper panel 37. When main body 31 is not in use, the inside devices are not exposed by closing upper panel 37 so that flat and simple 5 design image is achieved. Anticipating that a computer system is developed and merged into an AV device in the future, upper panel 37 is designed such that it can be modified to a drawer type or rotating type.

Display 51 basically comprises pedestal 52 and display 10 portion 53 which is connected to pedestal 52 moveably in a horizontal direction (pan direction) and in a vertical direction (tilt direction). CRT 55 is arranged at the front of display portion 53. Speakers 61 and 62 are arranged inside left and right tapered faces 56 and 57 of display portion 53.

15 Groove 58 is provided at the center of the top face of display portion 53. In a situation where infrared ray receiver 24 for receiving infrared rays emitted from IR commander 23 is attached on the top face of display portion 53, a cord of infrared ray receiver 24 can be embedded in groove 58 for cable disposal. As IR commander 23 is moved in the up/down and left/right directions, infrared ray receiver 20 24 detects the movement and supplies a detection signal to main body 31. Main body 31 detects the operation of IR commander 23 from the detection signal and moves a cursor on 25 CRT 55 in accordance with the detection signal. Instead of receiving the cord of infrared ray receiver 24, groove 58 of

display 51 may receive a cord of other device such as a television camera which is put on display 51 to constitute a television phone.

Fig. 2 shows an example of the inside of main body 31.

5 For example, PENTIUM (trademark) by Intel Corp. is used as CPU (Central Processing Unit) 71. This CPU operates in accordance with an internal clock of 166 MHZ or an external clock of 66 MHZ. RAM 72 is a main memory of 16 MB to store data and program to be processed by CPU 71. ROM 73 stores a program 10 necessary for CPU 71 to execute various processes. EEPROM (Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory) 74 stores data which need to be stored even after a power supply to main body 31 is turned off.

15 Graphics processing portion 75 handles a moving picture processing (color space transformation for transforming YUV signals which is a display format for moving picture data, to RGB signals which is a format for graphics data; scaling (enlarging or reducing) for displaying in a desired image size; or processing for displaying an MPEG (Moving Picture 20 Experts Group) image as a full screen moving picture of 30 frames/s). Graphics processing portion 75 also handles a three-dimensional graphics processing (e.g. a rasterizing process for projecting a three-dimensional object onto a two-dimensional image plane; a glow-shading processing for making 25 a surface of an object look smooth; or an alpha-blending processing for describing a half-transparent object). In

addition, graphics processing portion 75 writes results of the processing in display memory 76, transforms them to analogue RGB signals and outputs them to display 51.

Digital sound processing portion 77 carries out expansion of ADPCM (Adaptive Difference Pulse Code Modulation) sound source, expansion of MPEG audio data, generation of sound effect such as reverberation and surrounding, FM (Frequency Modulation) sound synthesis (that is, a process for generating an audio signal by synthesizing plural sine waves of different frequencies and amplitudes) or MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) wave table synthesis process. The MIDI wave table synthesis process is a process for reproducing MIDI data by a built-in synthesizer with a wave table for storing digital data which are phonemes of various musical instruments. Each processed audio signal is mixed by a built-in audio mixer, transformed into an analogue audio signal and supplied to speakers 61 and 62 of display 51.

INTERCAST (trademark) board 78 receives INTERCAST broadcast signals through antenna 91 and demodulates them. In the INTERCAST, HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) data, which is a basis of World Wide Web (WWW) page, is inserted into vertical blanking periods of a video signal and transmitted. The received data is stored in hard disk drive (HDD) 80. The user can obtain a pseudo interactive environment by accessing HTML data back and forth in hard disk drive 80. For example, in the case of a sport program, scores, still pictures of

crucial scenes, video clips and so on are transmitted by the INTERCAST in accordance with contents of programs. These still pictures and video clips are linked with relevant information. For example, it is possible to access a source 5 of the relevant information through an analogue telephone line and to obtain the relevant information. The INTERCAST has been developed by Intel Corp.

DSVD (Digital Simultaneous Voice & Data) modem 79 time-division multiplexes voice and data in DSVD format developed 10 by Corp., and outputs them to a telephone line via modular jack 92. DSVD modem 79 also demodulates and separates an input signal of DSVD format, which signal is input via a telephone line, into a voice signal and data. In this format, digital-compressed audio signals and ordinary data signals are 15 multiplexed by the use of a header of V.42 protocol. If there is no audio signal, the maximum data transfer rate is 28.8k bits/s. If there is an audio signal, the maximum data transfer rate is 19.2k bits/s and the transfer rate of the audio signal is 9.6k bits/s. As a method for compressing and 20 expanding audio signals, DIGITALK (trade mark) by Rockwell, TrueSpeech (trademark) by DSP Group and so on may be used.

Floppy disk drive device 41 can drive a 3.5 inch floppy disk and can read and write data from and on floppy disks of three formats; 1.44MB, 1.2MB and 720kB. Hard disk drive 80 25 reads and writes data from and on a hard disk having 1.6GB storage capacity. CD-ROM drive 42 drives a CD-ROM at the 4

times speed of CD (compact disk).

Keyboard/mouse controller 81 carries out an interface function between keyboard 21 and CPU 71 or between mouse 22 and CPU 71. Keyboard/mouse controller 81 also receives an 5 output of infrared ray receiver 24 and outputs corresponding signals to CPU 71.

Although a single bus is shown in Fig. 2 for the purpose of simplification, it actually comprises a local bus for connecting the CPU and RAM 72, an ISA (Industry Standard 10 Architecture) bus connected to keyboard/mouse controller 81 and a PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect) bus to which ROM 73 to HDD 80, FDD 41, CD-ROM drive 42 and so on are connected. The ISA bus is a bus of 8 bits or 16 bits. The PCI bus is a bus of 32 bits or 64 bits. The PCI bus operates at the speed 15 between 25MHz and 66MHz and achieves a throughput of 528 KB/s at the maximum. This speed is more than 42 times faster than that of the ISA bus.

Expansion slot 82 is one for the PCI bus and expansion slot 83 is one for the ISA bus. A peripheral circuit of any 20 desired function (for example, a SCSI board and DVD (Digital Versatile Disc) player) can be connected to these expansion slots. Between the local bus and the PCI bus, and between the PCI bus and the ISA bus, there are provided with exclusive bus bridge circuits (not shown), respectively.

25 In a preferred embodiment, a graphical user interface according to the invention is displayed by a "navigator"

software which operates under the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) operating system manufactured by Microsoft Corp. Fig. 3 shows transition of menu screens of the graphical user interface. As shown in Fig. 3, a menu image of each level belongs to one of four categories (levels). Category 1 displays the first level menus and has buttons of categories 2 to 4 therein which will be later explained. When the buttons are clicked, the first level menu goes to second level menus (Category 2) corresponding to the clicked button. Category 2 is a 10 Application folder for registering application software. An icon of each application software is displayed in Category 2 (the Application folder). Category 3 shows application software which is of the third level. Category 4 shows a pop up dialogue box or a temporary window for setting and 15 displaying.

In this embodiment, four screen modes are basically provided as menu screens to select certain functions (icons). One of them is Video mode in which Video Wall 111 is displayed in the center, as shown in Fig. 4A. Video Wall 111 may be a 20 transparent screen so that a background image can be seen through it. On this transparent screen, a certain moving picture image (not shown in Fig. 4A) is displayed as the user chooses. For the convenience of explanation of the drawing, Fig. 4B is also provided to show the same as Fig. 4A except 25 that the background image is removed.

When a screen saver mode is turned on, if the user does

not input anything by using keyboard 21 or mouse 22 within a predetermined certain period after Video Wall 111 is displayed, the display is changed to a full screen video condition. In the full screen video condition, the moving picture image displayed in Video Wall 111 will be expanded onto an entire screen of display 51. The screen saver function inhibits printing of an image on CRT 55 of display 51. The user can also intentionally select the full screen video. When the user clicks Video Wall 111 by operating mouse 22, the video screen changes to the full screen video.

As shown in Fig. 4A, in the Video mode, Video Wall 111 is displayed at the center of the screen, a portion of A/V Wall 112 is displayed on the left and a portion of Application Wall 113 is displayed on the right. These three walls are arranged as if the user is standing inside a cube that shows three walls and is open to the sky. Clicking once either of the side walls moves the contents of that side wall to the center, in effect rotating the cube. When the wall is at the center, the user can activate any function in that wall by clicking a corresponding button once. Alternatively, when the user double-clicks any button in the side wall, a function corresponding to the double-clicked button is immediately activated. In this case, the user does not have to wait until the side wall moves first to the center by clicking the side wall once.

For example, in the Video mode shown in Fig. 4A, when the

user clicks once with mouse 22 any portion of A/V Wall 112 which is displayed on the left, the Video mode turns to the A/V mode as shown in Fig. 5. In this case, A/V Wall 112 is displayed at the center, Video Wall 111 is displayed on the right (at the position where Application Wall 113 was displayed until then as shown in Fig. 4A) and Application Wall 113 is displayed on the left (at the position where A/V Wall 112 was displayed until then). After A/V Wall 112 moves to the center and when the user further clicks any button in A/V Wall 112, a corresponding function is activated.

Alternatively, the user may double-clicks the button in A/V Wall 112 when A/V Wall 112 is displayed on the left in the Video mode, so that the corresponding function is immediately activated.

In the Video mode shown in Fig. 4A, when the user clicks once any portion of Application Wall 113 which is displayed on the right, the Video mode turns to the Application mode, as shown in Fig. 6A. In the Application mode, Application Wall 113 is displayed at the center, Video Wall 111 is displayed on the left and A/V Wall 112 is displayed on the right. After Application Wall 113 moves to the center and when the user further clicks any button in Application Wall 113, a corresponding function is activated. Alternatively, the user may double-clicks the button in Application Wall 113 when Application Wall 113 is displayed on the right in the Video mode, so that the corresponding function is immediately

activated.

In the A/V mode as shown in Fig. 5, when Video Wall 111 on the right is clicked once, the A/V mode changes back to the Video mode as shown in Fig. 4A. Similarly, in the A/V mode, 5 when Application Wall 113 on the left is clicked once, the Application mode is called as shown in Fig. 6A. An image in Video Wall 111 is displayed as a moving picture in the Video mode shown in Fig. 4A. However, as shown in Figs. 5 and 6 A, when Video Wall 111 is placed on the left or right (when only 10 a portion thereof is displayed), the image on Video Wall 111 is not a moving picture. Instead, an image at the moment of the transfer to that mode is displayed as a still picture.

Referring to Fig. 5 showing the A/V mode, A/V Wall 112 is displayed at the center of the screen. A/V Wall 112 may also 15 be a transparent screen so that a background image can be seen through it. On this transparent screen, selection buttons of a CD player, a WAV player, a MIDI player and a Mixer are displayed as a group. As explained above, these buttons are clicked with mouse 22 when the corresponding 20 functions need to be carried out.

The CD player button is operated to drive CD-ROM drive 42. WAV is a format name of files of sounds handled by a personal computer. The WAV player button is clicked to reproduce audio data of a certain name which data is stored as 25 a file. The MIDI player button is operated to reproduce musical instrument sounds by using a WAV table for storing

digital data of phoneme of the musical instrument sounds. The Mixer button is operated to mix plural audio signals.

Under the group of these buttons, PHONE button is displayed. The PHONE is a telephone software for a personal computer. By starting the PHONE, a telephone function, an answering machine function and a facsimile function can be achieved. It also has a telephone directory function and can store plural telephone numbers. By simply selecting a certain number among the plural telephone numbers and instructing a start command, the user can make a call to that number.

A Video File Player button is arranged on the right of the CD player button. The Video File Player button is operated to playback a VCR and/or video disk (not shown). A Video CD Player button under it is for playbacking a Video CD Player (not shown).

A More A/V button is arranged at the lower right position of A/V Wall 112. The More A/V button is operated when a new application software is stored. The More A/V button is also operated for setting of a surround system, a volume of main body 31 of the personal computer and so on.

Referring to Fig. 6A showing the Application mode, Application Wall 113 is displayed at the center of the screen. A/V Wall 112 may also be a transparent screen so that a background image can be seen through it. Four buttons (folders) of Work Center, Reference Library, Game Arcade and Kid's Land are displayed in Application Wall 113. The Work

Center is a folder for registering business software and the Reference Library is a folder for registering dictionaries and so on. The Game Arcade is a folder for registering game software and the Kid's Land is a folder for registering educational software.

Referring to Figs. 4A, 5 and 6A which show the Video mode, the A/V mode and the Application mode, respectively, taskbar 101 of the WINDOWS 95 operating system is visible at the bottom of the screen during operation of the three-dimensional GUI created and displayed by the navigator software. This taskbar is same as displayed when the user is in the WINDOWS 95 operating system environment. As shown in Figs. 4A, 5 and 6A, Start button 102 and a clock image for indicating a time are respectively displayed on the left and the right of taskbar 101. Above taskbar 101, image displaying portion 103 is provided and a substantial menu image is displayed there. By making taskbar 101 visible, the navigator software provides access to important operating system functions from within the graphical user interface by the navigator.

The navigator makes taskbar 101 available from within the graphical user interface, either by fixing the display of taskbar 101 along the bottom of the screen no matter which wall the user is viewing at the center, as shown in Figs. 4A, 5 and 6A, or by using "autohide" feature. The autohide feature keeps taskbar 101 hidden so that the entire screen of CRT 55

can be used to display the graphical user interface by the navigator. This is shown in Fig. 6B, for example. No taskbar appears at the bottom of the screen in Fig. 6B. When the user moves a mouse pointer toward the bottom of the screen where 5 taskbar 101 would normally be displayed, taskbar 101 becomes visible again, as shown in Fig. 6A. Once visible, the user can select and activated the buttons on taskbar 101 to invoke function of the WINDOWS 95 operating systems. Other means for un-hiding taskbar 101 are possible such as by using a 10 predefined "hot key" on keyboard 21.

On taskbar 101, when some program has been started and the corresponding window has been opened in the WINDOWS 95 environment, a button corresponding to the opened program is displayed. In order to change the navigator GUI to the window 15 corresponding to the opened program, the user clicks the button on taskbar 101 by mouse 22. When the opened program is closed, the corresponding button on taskbar 101 is also removed from taskbar 101. When start button 102 is clicked with mouse 22, a start menu (not shown) is displayed. In the 20 start menu, there are displayed items necessary to use the WINDOWS 95. These items include, for example, "Program", "File recently used", "Set", "Search", "Help", "Specify file name and execute" or "End of Windows".

When "Program" is clicked, a list of programs ready to be 25 started is displayed. When "File recently used" is clicked, a list of files recently opened is displayed. When "Set" is

clicked, a list of elements which construct the system and of which the user can change the setting is displayed. When "Search" is clicked, folders, files, commonly owned computers, mails, messages and so on can be searched. When "Help" is 5 clicked, a help function is started. By using the help function, the user can find how to operate WINDOWS from a screen of table of contents and a keyword screen. When "Specify file name and execute" is clicked, a program can be started or a folder can be opened in the same way as when MD-10 DOS (trademark) commands are input. When "End of Windows" is clicked, a mode to disconnect a power supply to a computer is selected. It can also restart the computer or log off from the WINDOWS 95.

By allowing the navigator to co-exist with taskbar 101 of 15 the operating system, the user can use remembered "paths" to access and launch programs and data. Because the navigator software behaves as an application to the operating system, the user can easily move back and forth between the operating system and the navigator. This is because the navigator will 20 appear as an application program and can be provided with a "Navigator button" (not shown) on the taskbar.

As shown in Fig. 6A, the four buttons in Application Wall 113 are in horizontally elongated shapes. As shown in Fig. 7, for example, these buttons could be arranged in a matrix so 25 that they are positioned at the upper left, upper right, lower left and lower right positions of a rectangle on Application

Wall 113. With this arrangement, however, only the two left buttons (the Work Center button and the Game Arcade button) among the four buttons can be displayed in the Video mode, for example, as shown in Fig. 8. In the case of the A/V mode, 5 only the two right buttons (the Reference Library button and the Kid's Land button) can be displayed as shown in Fig. 9. Accordingly, the user cannot see all the four buttons available in the Application mode when the Application Wall is displayed on the left or right. When the user wants to 10 activate the Reference Library or the Kid's Land in the Video mode as shown in Fig. 8, or the Work Center or the Game Arcade in the A/V mode as shown in Fig. 9, these folders cannot be immediately activated because the user cannot double-click these folders which are not displayed in the screen. The user 15 first must select the Application mode by clicking once. Then, only after Application Wall 113 moves to the center and all the four buttons in a matrix can be seen, can the user click a button corresponding to a desired folder.

On the other hand, if each button (folder) is displayed 20 in a horizontally elongated shape, as shown in Fig. 6A, all the four buttons are always seen and can be directly selected by double-clicking in either the Video mode or the A/V mode, as shown in Figs. 4A or 5. Therefore, a desired folder can be immediately activated without changing these modes to the 25 Application mode first.

In each of the modes shown in Figs. 4A, 5 and 6A, when

the user clicks Net Space 114 which exists above the Wall displayed at the center, it changes to a Net Space mode and a menu is displayed as shown in Fig. 10. In this mode, Net Space Wall 141 is displayed nearly at the center. A part of 5 Video Wall 111 is displayed under it, a part of A/V Wall 112 is displayed at the lower left and a part of Application Wall 113 is displayed at the lower right.

As shown in Fig.10, on Net Space Wall 141, there are arranged eight icons 151-1 to 151-8 corresponding to various 10 kinds of application software. At the lower left of Net Space Wall 141, there are arranged "iconized" miniature windows 152-1 and 152-2. These miniature windows correspond to different 15 pages which Net Space Wall 141 comprises. Only one of the pages can be displayed at once. Since two miniature windows 152-1 and 152-2 are displayed in this example, it indicates that there are two different pages accessible in Net Space 20 Wall 141. Miniature window 152-1 corresponds to the first page which is currently displayed. Similarly, miniature window 152-2 corresponds to the second page. Accordingly, the user can easily recognize that there are total two pages on 25 Net Space Wall 141 even though he can see only one full page at once. There may be up to four pages in Net Pace Wall 141.

Eight miniature icons in miniature window 152-1 correspond to currently displayed icons 151-1 to 151-8 on the 25 first page. Note that a size of miniature icons in miniature window 152-1 is larger than that of miniature icons in other

miniature window 152-2. The miniature window having larger miniature icons corresponds to the currently displayed page of Net Space Wall 141. Therefore, if the miniature icons in miniature window 152-2 are larger than other miniature icons 5 in miniature window 152-1, it shows that the second page is currently opened. In addition, the user can also know how many icons (application software) exist in each page before actually opening the page. Note that miniature window 152-2 has only three miniature icons therein. This means that the 10 second page of Net Space Wall 141 has only three icons therein.

In order to change the page of Net Space wall 141, the user clicks a miniature window corresponding to the desired page. If the user clicks miniature window 152-2, for example, 15 the second page is displayed and three icons are displayed therein. The size of the three miniature icons in miniature window 152-2 becomes larger while the size of the eight miniature icons in miniature window 152-1 becomes smaller. As a result, the user can notice that the currently displayed 20 page is the second page which corresponds to miniature window 152-2.

Even though the currently displayed page is indicated by the larger size of miniature icons in miniature window in this embodiment, color or other attribute of miniature icons or 25 miniature windows may be changed to indicate which page is currently opened. For example, among miniature windows, a

miniature window corresponding to the currently displayed page may be highlighted or reversely displayed to be distinguished from other miniature windows corresponding to unopened pages.

When Run Application Button 153 located at the lower portion of Net Space Wall 141 is clicked after certain one of icons 151-1 to 151-8 is selected, an application software corresponding to the selected icon is started. Add Application button 154 is operated to add a new application software to a folder displayed by Net Space Wall 141.

In the Net Space mode shown in Fig. 10, when the user clicks any one of Video Wall 111, A/V Wall 112 and Application Wall 113, the mode turns to the Video mode, the A/V mode and the Application mode shown in Figs. 4A, 5 and 6A, respectively. In any one of the above four modes, if the above-described screen saver function is turned on, the mode turns to a full screen video mode when there is no input by the user for a predetermined period. When keyboard 21 or mouse 22 is operated in the full screen video mode, it turns back to the immediately proceeding mode (the last mode).

Next, lower level windows with respect to the above-described upper level walls will be explained. In the A/V mode shown in Fig. 5, when the WAV Player button is clicked, operational panels of the WAV Player and Mixer are displayed in front of A/V wall 112, Video Wall 111 and Application Wall 113, as shown in Fig. 11. Various kinds of buttons are displayed on the operational panel. The user can operate any

button among the various kinds of buttons so that he can command the WAV Player and Mixer to do a certain function. Similarly, in the A/V mode shown in Fig. 5, when the CD button is turned on, images of operational panel of a CD player is displayed.

5 Alternatively, when the WAV player button in A/V Wall is double-clicked in the Application mode shown in Fig. 6A, it turns to the A/V mode shown in Fig. 11 and an operational panels of the WAV player and Mixer are immediately displayed.

10 In this case, there is no need to change a mode from the Application mode shown in Fig. 6A to the A/V mode shown in Fig. 5 and then to operate the WAV player button. Instead, double-clicking the WAV player button in the A/V mode shown in Fig. 6A not only changes the mode to the A/V mode, but also

15 immediately activates the WAV player function a shown in Fig. 11. Therefore, a quick operation is possible.

On the other hand, when a button of the Game Arcade is clicked in the Application mode shown in Fig. 6A, for example, Game Arcade Window 161 is displayed in front of and almost entirely covering Application Wall 113, as shown in Fig. 12. Game Arcade Window 161 is transparent so that Application Wall 113, which is the upper level to Game Arcade Window 161, can be seen through behind Game Arcade Window 161. Therefore, the user can easily recognize what is the upper level window (Application Wall 113) of the currently displayed lower level window (Game Arcade Window 161) and that the upper level

window is opened behind the lower level window.

A method for making an image half-transparent so that an image behind a front image can be seen through is described in Japanese laid-open patent 64-65627 and Japanese laid-open patent 01-65627, for example. One way to display a half-transparent image is to alternatively display pixels of each of two overlapping windows so that the pixels of both windows are arranged in a checkered pattern.

In Game Arcade Window 161 shown in Fig. 12, there are displayed icons 171-1 to 171-8 corresponding to eight application software registered in this folder. At the lower left position of Game Arcade Window 161, there is "iconized" miniature window 172 corresponding to pages of Game Arcade Window 161. In this embodiment, since Game Arcade Window 161 comprises only one page, only one miniature window 172 is displayed. Therefore, the user can easily recognize that there is only a single page in Game Arcade Window 161.

At the lower right position of Game Arcade Window 161, Run Application Button 173 and Add Application button 174 are arranged. These buttons have the similar functions to those of Run Application Button 153 and Add Application button 154 shown in Fig. 10.

Fig. 13 shows a display condition when Add Application button 174 shown in Fig. 12 is operated. In this case, Add Application Window 181 is displayed in front of Game Arcade Window 161. Since Add Application Window 181, which is of

5 further low level, is also transparent, the user can recognize that Game Arcade Window 161 is displayed behind it. However, Fig. 13 shows Add Application Window 181 as non-transparent for the simplification of the drawing and for the easier understanding thereof.

10 Game Arcade space and WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space are displayed on Add Application Window 181 and names and icons of software registered in each of them are displayed on displaying portions 182 and 183. In this embodiment, six files; appabc. exe, appdef. exe, appghi. exe, appjkl. exe and appxyz. exe are registered in the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space. Three files; the appabc. exe, the appdef. exe and the appghi. exe among the six files are registered in the Game Arcade space. The user can register any file existing in the 15 WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space to the Game Arcade space by operating Move button 184. The user can move any file registered in the Game Arcade space back to the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space by clicking Remove button 185. In displaying portion 183 of the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space, 20 the software registered in the Game Arcade space have their brightness or colors changed or are reversely displayed so that they can be distinguished from those not registered.

25 Scroll bars 186 and 187 are displayed in displaying areas 182 and 183 of the Game Arcade space and the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space, respectively. If there are too many files to be displayed at once in each displaying area, the file

names are scrolled up or down by adjusting the scroll bar with mouse 22 so that a desired file name can be displayed.

Under displaying portion 182 of the Game Arcade space, there is provided with displaying area 188 for displaying the name of category displayed in displaying portion 182. In this embodiment, a name of the Game Arcade is displayed there as a category. Button 189 is operated to scroll the categories.

10 In displaying area 200 for displaying names of drives, C drive is displayed in this embodiment. A name of drive displayed in displaying area 200 can be scrolled by operating button 201.

15 For example, by operating button 201, a certain drive name is specified in drive displaying area 200. Currently, drive C (hard disk) is specified. In this case, names of software stored in the hard disk are displayed in displaying area 183 of the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) space.

When the user operates button 189 in displaying area 188 to display a certain category in displaying area 188, names of application software registered in that category are displayed in displaying area 182. The user operates Move button 184 and Remove button 185 so that a certain application software can be registered in a folder of that category.

20 To carry out registration to the Game Arcade space (folder), the user operates Apply button 202. When the user finally does not want to register for some reasons, he 25 operates Cancel button 203. When Apply button 202 or Cancel button 203 is operated, a display condition shown in Fig. 13

goes back to a display condition shown in Fig. 12.

In various menu screen as shown in Figs. 4A, 5, 6A, 10, 11 and 12, in addition to buttons (icons) each corresponding to each folder, icons 121 to 129 in the form of symbolized three-dimensional objects are superimposed on the background image. They are displayed in certain fixed positions such that they do not overlap any of Video Wall 111, A/V Wall 112 and Application Wall 113.

Icon 121 in the form of a three-dimensional symbol of letter X is an icon for an exit and is clicked to end this 10 navigator (a software running on the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) to display the above-described menu image). Icon 122 in the form of a three-dimensional symbol of letter W is operated to carry out the WINDOWS 95 (trademark). In this case, the navigator 15 (software) is minimized and displayed as an icon. Icon 123 displayed as a three-dimensional symbol "?" means a Help function. When icon 123 is clicked a help menu at the time of the clicking is displayed.

Icon 124 displayed as a three-dimensional symbol of gear 20 is an icon for Quick Start Settings. Icon 124 is selected for setting as to whether, immediately after the power-on of main body 31, a software to be started is the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) or the navigator software, or whether a screen saver is on or off. Operations when icon 124 is selected will 25 be explained later referring to Figs. 14A and 14B.

Icon 125 is displayed in the form of a three-dimensional

symbol to imagine a disk. This icon is displayed when software provided by a company providing this navigator software is set in CD-ROM drive 142. Software recorded on the CD-ROM are automatically classified category by category and 5 are registered in a folder corresponding to icon 125.

Icon 126 displayed as a three-dimensional symbol of an opened book is an icon for tutorial and corresponds to a folder for storing tutorial materials to explain an operation of each software. Icon 127 is the My Space icon corresponding 10 to a folder for registering software which the user often uses. Icon 127 is displayed in the form of a three-dimensional symbol of a cube.

Icon 128 is Sony Station (trademark) icon and is displayed in the form of a three-dimensional symbol of two 15 rings arranged under the letter S. When Sony Station icon 128 is clicked, a browser software is started so that a home page of the company which provides this navigator software is automatically accessed through the Internet.

Icon 129 is an icon for Sony Online Support (SOS). When 20 this icon is clicked, a service center for a personal computer is automatically accessed through a network so that the user can obtain on-line instructions for trouble shootings of the personal computer.

Fig. 14A shows a display example when Quick Start 25 Settings icon 124 is operated. When Quick Start Settings icon 124 is clicked in a situation shown in Fig. 4A, for example,

Quick Start Settings window 211 is displayed in front of Video Wall 111, A/V Wall 112 and Application Wall 113, as shown in Fig. 14A. In this case too, Quick Start Settings window 211, which is of lower level, is transparent so that the Walls 5 behind and the background can be seen through. For the convenience of explanation of Quick Start Setting functions, Fig. 14B shows the same as Fig. 14A except that the upper level Walls and the background image to be displayed behind are removed. In Quick Start Settings window 211, the user can 10 select with mouse 22 in displaying area 221 as to which of the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) and the navigator (Sony Quick Start) should be started upon the power-on of main body 31. In the example shown in Figs. 14A and 14B, the latter is selected.

In displaying area 224 with displaying portions 225-1 to 15 225-3, the user can choose one of three kinds of images as themes 1 to 3. The images of the themes 1 to 3 are images each corresponding to when the power-on time is in the morning, in the afternoon and at night, respectively. For example, an image of desert is displayed as a background in 20 the example of display as shown in Fig. 4A. Suppose that the desert image is registered as the theme 1. If a power of main body 31 is turned on in the morning, the desert image appears as a background. When the user turns on main body 31 in the day time or at night, different background image registered as 25 theme 2 or 3 appears. Alternatively, the background image may be chosen not in accordance with the power-on time but in

accordance with the current time so that the background is changing as time goes.

By the way, when a mode is switched from one to another, audio signals can be output to inform the user of the switching of the mode. In displaying area 224 shown in Figs. 5 14 A and 14 B, it can be selected whether the audio signals should be output (turned on) or not output (turned off). Furthermore, a volume of the audio signals in that case is set in displaying area 227 so that a certain audio volume can be 10 achieved.

In displaying area 228, On or Off of the screen saver function can be selected. When the screen saver function is turned on, Set Up button 232 is clicked so that an image of moving picture to be displayed in the screen saver function 15 can be selected. When Set Up button 232 is operated, a directory for storing moving pictures is displayed. When button 231 is operated after a desired directory is selected, a certain file name among files stored in the directory is displayed in displaying area 230. The user operates button 20 231 to scroll the file names so that a desired file name is displayed in displaying area 230.

The user changes up or down the number displayed in displaying area 233 by operating Up button 234-1 or Down button 234-2 so that a fixed time to lapse until the screen 25 saver function is turned on is set. It can be also selected whether a certain sound is generated or not (turned on or off)

when the screen saver function is carried out. When it is selected that the sound is generated when the screen saver function is carried out, a volume of the sound can be also set in displaying area 236. When Demo button 237 is clicked, the screen saver function which has been set is demonstrated. 5 Apply button 238 is operated to register the above-described setting and Cancel button 239 is operated not to register the setting.

As shown in Figs. 4A, 5, 6A, 10, 11 and 12, because icons 10 121 to 129 are displayed in the form of these three-dimensional symbols and superimposed upon the background image, if the icons are made stationary, it is hard for the user to intuitively recognize whether the symbols are a part 15 of the background or icons. In this embodiment, therefore, icons 121 to 129 are rotated so that their 360 degree images are displayed sequentially and continuously. By this, the user can immediately and certainly recognize that the symbols (images) are not a part of the background image but the icons.

20 In addition, rotating three-dimensional icons 121 to 129 has another effect to avoid the printing of the icon images on the CRT. As shown in Figs. 4A to 12, these three-dimensional icons are always displayed at the same fixed positions regardless of the modes selected. The three-dimensional icons 25 never disappear except in a rare case. Therefore, the undesirable printing of the icon images on the CRT is more

likely to occur than regular type of icon and buttons which appear and disappear at various locations depending upon the mode selected. Even though the positions of three-dimensional icons 121 to 129 are still fixed, rotational movement of them 5 reduces a period for which a certain image is displayed at the same position.

As shown in the above-identified figures, icons 121 to 127 near the ground of the background image are displayed with their shadows thereunder in order to show more realistically 10 that they are three-dimensional images. (Especially, icons 124 and 125 have intensive shadows.) The size of the shadows also change as the icons rotate.

Fig. 15 shows an example of bit-map to display icon 125 which is rotating. As shown in Fig. 15, bit-map data of 15 eighteen situations 1 to 18 are prepared in advance as bit-map data for icon 125. The bit-map data are read and displayed on display memory 76 in the order from No. 1 to No. 18, so that icon 125 is easily displayed as if it is rotating clockwise. When the shadows are displayed, the image data of both icon 20 125 and its shadow are prepared in advance as images 1 to 18 and they are sequentially read and displayed on display memory 76. Other three-dimensional icons are also prepared in the same manner using bit-map data. Accordingly, unlike the CD player button and Video File Player button which are displayed 25 in the form of two-dimensional relief in A/V Wall 112 as shown in Fig. 5, icons 121 to 129 are displayed as an image floating

in the background and independently existing so that the user can intuitively recognize them as icons.

Referring to a flowchart in Fig. 16, changes of conditions of the menu screen immediately after the power-on 5 will be explained. When the power is turned on, it is first determined in Step 1 whether the Sony Quick Start has been selected or not. If the user has selected the Sony Quick Start in displaying area 221 shown in Figs. 14A and 14B, it goes to step 2 (the first means) so that a process to display 10 the last screen is carried out. EEPROM 74 (or hard disk drive 80) memorizes which one of the Video mode, A/V mode and Application mode is the last mode at the moment of the last power-off. CPU 71 reads the last mode from EEPROM 74 and controls display 51 to display the screen corresponding to the 15 memorized last mode. If the last mode is not stored, that is, if the last mode is not one of the three modes; Video mode, A/V mode and Application mode, a predetermined default screen (screen in the Video mode, for example) will be displayed. If the user turns off the power in the A/V mode, for example, the 20 image shown in Fig. 5 will be displayed again in display 51 when the power is turned on.

Next, it goes to step S3 so that CPU 71 starts its internal timer. When a display condition as shown in Figs. 4A, 5, 6A or 10 continues for a long time, the same image is 25 displayed at the same position for a long time so that there is a risk that the image is printed on CRT 55. Therefore, if

the time period set in displaying area 228 shown in Figs. 14A and 14B has lapsed, the screen saver function is carried out so that a moving picture image set in displaying area 224 is displayed as a full screen.

5 In step S4, it is determined whether a predetermined time period (the time set in displaying area 228 shown in Figs. 14A and 14B) has lapsed or not. If the predetermined time period has not lapsed yet, it goes to step S9 where it is determined whether keyboard 21 or mouse 21 is operated, and if not, it
10 goes back to step S4. In this way, it waits until keyboard 21 or mouse 22 is operated. If it is determined in step S4 that the predetermined time period has lapsed without operation of keyboard 21 or mouse 22, it goes to step S5 so that the full screen display is carried out.

15 Next, it goes to step S6 so that it waits until keyboard 21 or mouse 22 is operated. When keyboard 21 or mouse 22 is operated, a signal corresponding to the operation is inputted through keyboard/mouse controller 81 to CPU 71. At this time, CPU 71 goes to step S7 so that the timer is reset. Then, it
20 goes to step S8 so that CPU 71 reads the last screen which was displayed immediately before the full screen display and which is stored in EEPROM 74 (or hard disk drive 80) so that the last screen is displayed. After that, it returns to step S3 and steps to follow are repeated.

25 On the other hand, if it is determined in step S9 that keyboard 21 or mouse 22 is operated, it goes to step S10 so

that CPU 71 resets the timer and goes to step S11 (the second means). In step S11, a process corresponding to the operated key is carried out. Then it returns to step S3 and steps to follow are repeated. On the other hand, if it is determined 5 in step S1 that the Sony Quick Start is not selected, it goes to step S12 so that the WINDOWS 95 (trademark) display is carried out.

Fig. 17 shows an imaginary screen arrangement of four basic Walls. In this embodiment, an imaginary screen of a 10 three-dimensional rectangular parallelepiped (cube) is imagined. The rectangular parallelepiped (cube) has six faces comprising four sides of front, left, right and back faces and top and bottom faces. Each Wall is arranged on one of the 15 front, left, right and top faces out of the six faces. A menu image is displayed as if the view point of the user exists inside the rectangular parallelepiped.

Fig. 17 corresponds to the Video mode shown in Fig. 4A. For the convenience of explanation, letters A, B, C and D are displayed on Video Wall 111 in the front, A/V Wall 112 on the 20 left, Application Wall 113 on the right and Net Space Wall 141 on the top, respectively. As described above, when A/V Wall 112 on the left is clicked in a situation shown in Fig. 17, A/V Wall 112 moves to the front, as shown in Fig. 18. Video Wall 111 which has been displayed in front until then moves to 25 the right where Application Wall 113 has been displayed until then. Application Wall 113 which has been displayed on the

right until then moves to the left where A/V Wall 112 has been displayed until then.

In the imaginary three-dimensional object shown in Fig. 17, where A/V Wall 112 is displayed in front and Video Wall 111 is displayed on the right, it would be natural for Application Wall 113 which has been displayed on the right until then to be displayed on the back, as shown in Fig. 19. In this embodiment, however, Application Wall 113 is displayed not on the back, but on the left, as shown in Fig. 18.

Similarly, when Application Wall 113 on the right is clicked in a situation shown in Fig. 17, Application Wall 113 moves to the front where Video Wall 111 has been displayed until then. Video Wall 111 moves to the left where A/V Wall 112 has been displayed until then. In this situation, it would be natural for A/V Wall 112, which has been displayed on the left until then, to be displayed on the back, as shown in Fig. 20. In this embodiment, however, A/V Wall 112 is displayed on the right where Application Wall 113 has been displayed until then.

This is for the following reason. If Application Wall 113 is displayed not on the left, but on the back as shown in Fig. 19, Application Wall 113 would disappear from display 51 and the user would not be able to view it. To have Application Wall 113 displayed in front from a situation shown in Fig. 19, it would be necessary for the user first to click Video Wall 111 which is displayed on the right so that Video

5 Wall 111 moves to the front and so that Application Wall 113 moves to the right side, as shown in Fig. 17. Then, by further clicking Application Wall 113 in a situation shown in Fig. 17, Application Wall 113 is finally displayed in front, as shown in Fig. 20. In this case, clicking operation must be made twice.

10 This procedure is similar when A/V Wall 112, which is displayed on the back as shown in Fig. 20, is going to be displayed in front. In this case, Video Wall 111 is clicked in a situation shown in Fig. 20, so that Video Wall 111 moves to the front and so that A/V Wall 112 moves to the left as shown in Fig. 17. By further clicking A/V Wall 112, A/V Wall 112 is finally displayed in front as shown in Fig. 19.

15 On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 18 or 21, if no fixed screen is arranged on the back, it becomes always possible to display one of the three sides in front by a single clicking so that operational performance is improved.

20 In this embodiment, though the Walls are arranged and displayed on the four sides, the actual process can be done as if each Wall is arranged on the three sides of a triangular prism, as shown in Fig. 22.

25 Therefore, as shown in Fig. 22, it is possible to display the images displayed on the three sides of an imaginary triangular prism as if they were seen from a view point inside the prism. However, by doing so, it becomes impossible to display the Walls of the right and left sides on display 51

which is two-dimensional. As shown in Fig. 4A, Video Wall 111 and A/V Wall 112 are displayed to constitute a right angle therebetween. Video Wall 111 and Application Wall 113 are also displayed to constitute a right angle therebetween.

5 However, if the two Walls are displayed to have an acute angle therebetween, the user cannot recognize the image as three-dimensional because a range of human vision is not so wide. Therefore, it is preferable to utilize a display method as shown in Figs. 17, 18 and 21.

10 In the above embodiment, when a Wall is displayed in front, portions of other fixed windows are displayed on the right and left. However, it is also possible that when Video Wall 111, for example, is displayed in front, A/V Wall 112 and Application Wall 113 are not displayed on the right and left.

15 In the above embodiment, Net Space Wall 141 is usually not displayed. As shown in Fig. 4A, in a condition where the Walls on the three sides are displayed, when a certain position above the front Wall is clicked, Net Space Wall 141 is displayed, as shown in Fig. 10. As shown in Fig. 23, when 20 certain area 213 above Video Wall 111 is clicked, Net Space Wall 141 becomes displayed at the center of the screen. When area 211 or 212 is clicked, A/V Wall 112 or Application Wall 113 can be arranged and displayed at the center of the screen.

Fig. 24 shows another embodiment. In this embodiment, an 25 outer rectangular parallelepiped for displaying a background image is arranged around an inner rectangular parallelepiped

(including a cube) for displaying walls. On the front, left, right and top faces of the outer rectangular parallelepiped, background images for the corresponding faces of the inner rectangular parallelepiped are arranged. For the convenience of explanation, in Fig. 24, these background images are shown by letters "a" to "d" corresponding to letters "A" to "D" which are the images on the inner rectangular parallelepiped. The background image shown by letter "a" is displayed behind the image shown by letter "A", the background image shown by letter "b" is displayed behind the image shown by letter "B", the background image shown by letter "c" is displayed behind the image shown by letter "C" and the background image shown by letter "d" is displayed behind the image shown by letter "D".

Because a background image corresponding to a wall which is displayed in front is displayed as a background image for display 51, the user can intuitively recognize from the background image which window the currently selected wall is so that operational performance is improved.

As described above, the background is displayed and three walls 111 to 113 are displayed not totally covering the background image but leaving a part of the background image uncovered and further making the background image seen through, as shown in Fig. 4A. In addition, icons 121 to 129 constitute a part of the background image and are displayed as if floating and rotating in a three-dimensional space. Accordingly, the user is provided with a menu giving open-

space impression.

Although no image is displayed on the bottom face of the rectangular parallelepiped in the above embodiments, it is possible to display an image on the bottom face. Although the present invention has been described above as applied to a personal computer, for example, the present invention can be also applied to other display control apparatus.

What is claimed is:

1. A graphical user interface for displaying a menu image on a display, comprising:

5 first means for displaying a background image on said display; and

second means for displaying a three-dimensional icon on said display, said icon being selectable by a user to carry out a corresponding function.

10 2. The graphical user interface according to claim 1, further comprising third means for rotating said three-dimensional icon on said display.

15 3. The graphical user interface according to claim 2, wherein said third means comprises a memory for storing plural images each representing said three-dimensional icon viewed from plural different directions.

4. The graphical user interface according to claim 2, further comprising fourth means for displaying a shadow of said three-dimensional icon thereunder on said display.

20 5. A graphical user interface for displaying a menu image on a display, comprising:

first means operable by a user for selecting one of plural display modes;

25 second means for displaying said menu image on said display in different arrangements in accordance with the mode selected by said first means;

third means for displaying plural three-dimensional icons on said display, said plural three-dimensional icons being selectable by the user to carry out corresponding functions, wherein said plural three-dimensional icons are displayed at 5 fixed positions on said display regardless of which one of said plural modes is selected by said first means; and

fourth means for rotating each of said plural three-dimensional icons at said fixed positions on said display.

6. The graphical user interface according to claim 5, 10 wherein said fourth means comprises a memory for storing plural images each representing each of said three-dimensional icons viewed from plural different directions.

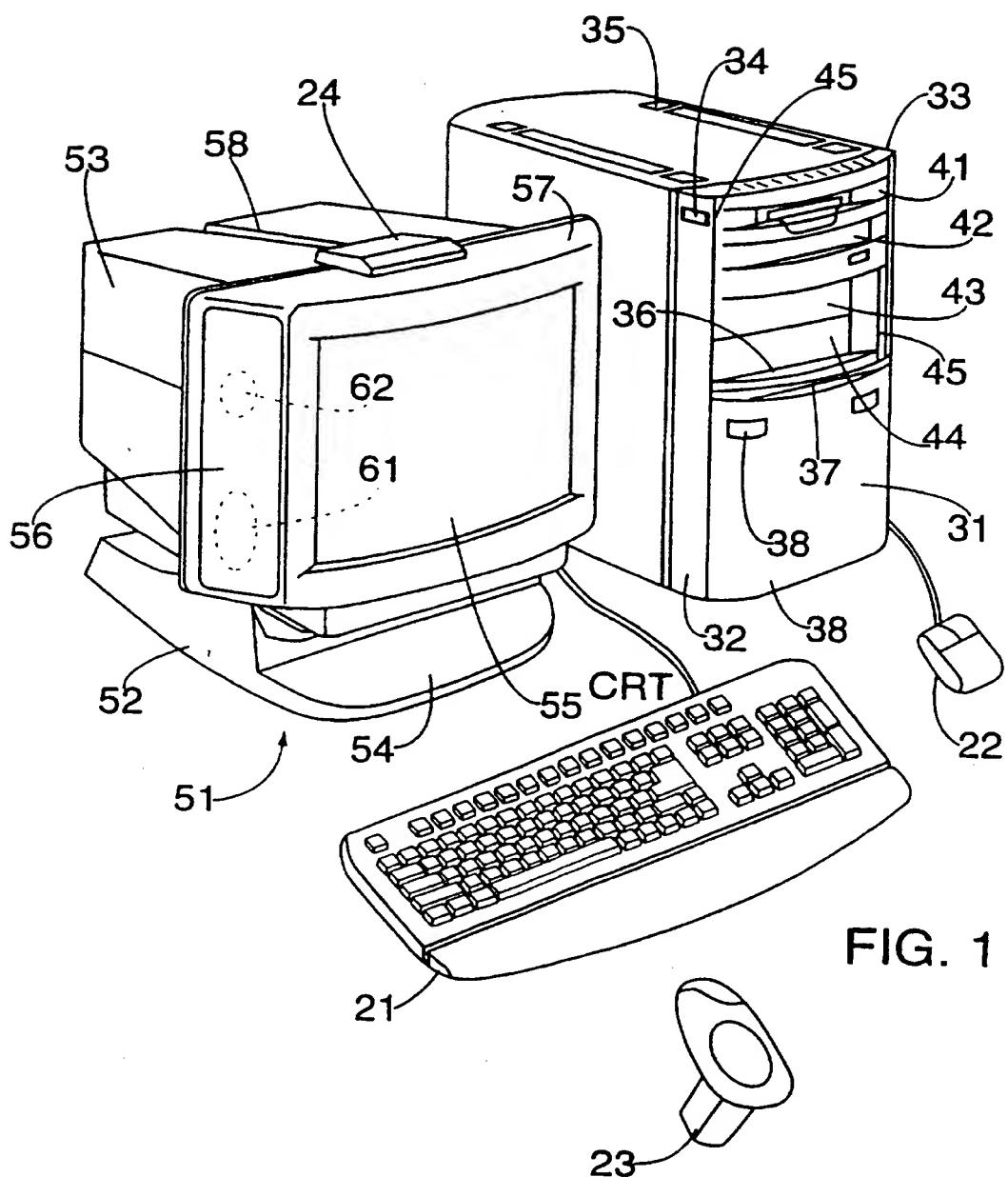


FIG. 1

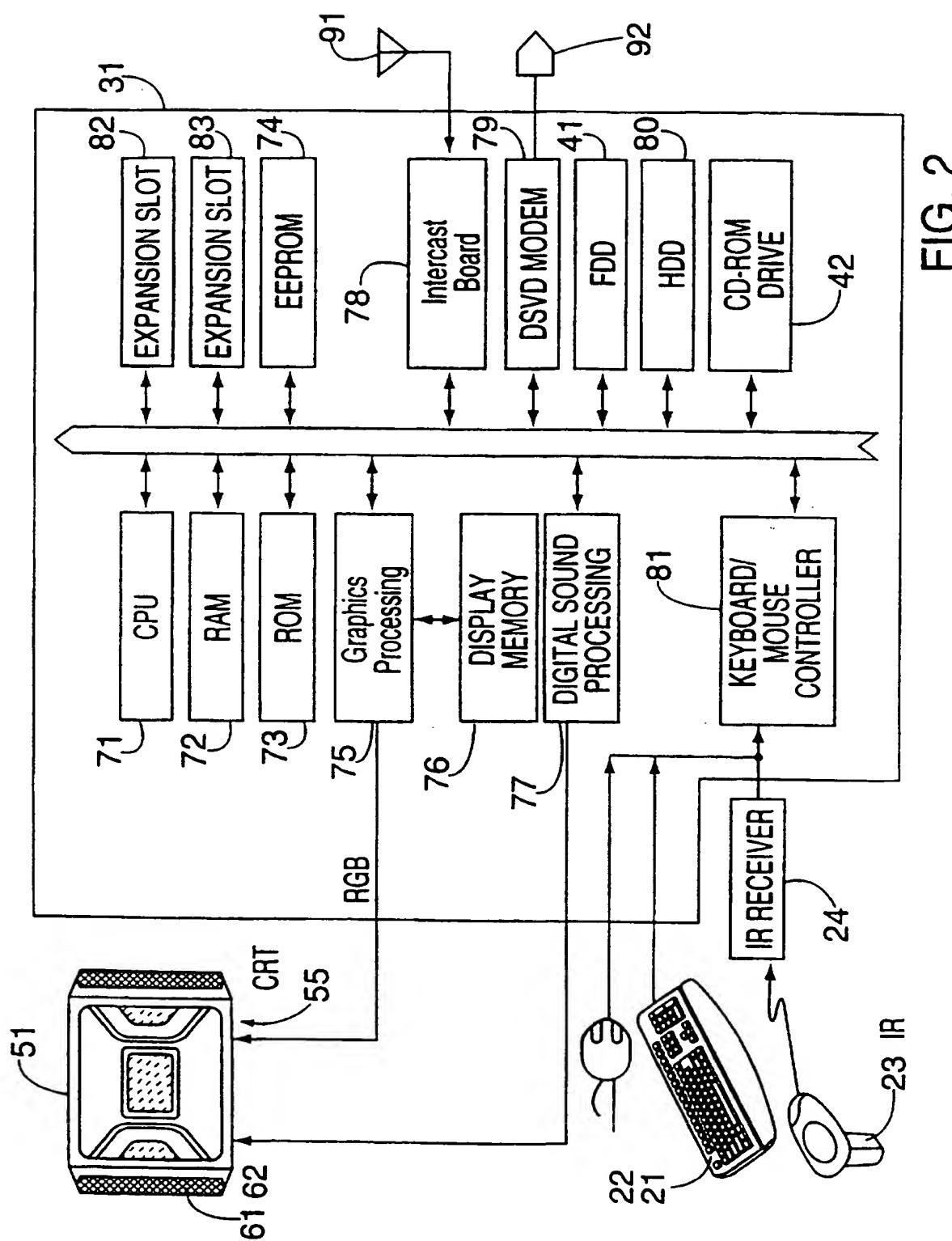


FIG. 2

3/26

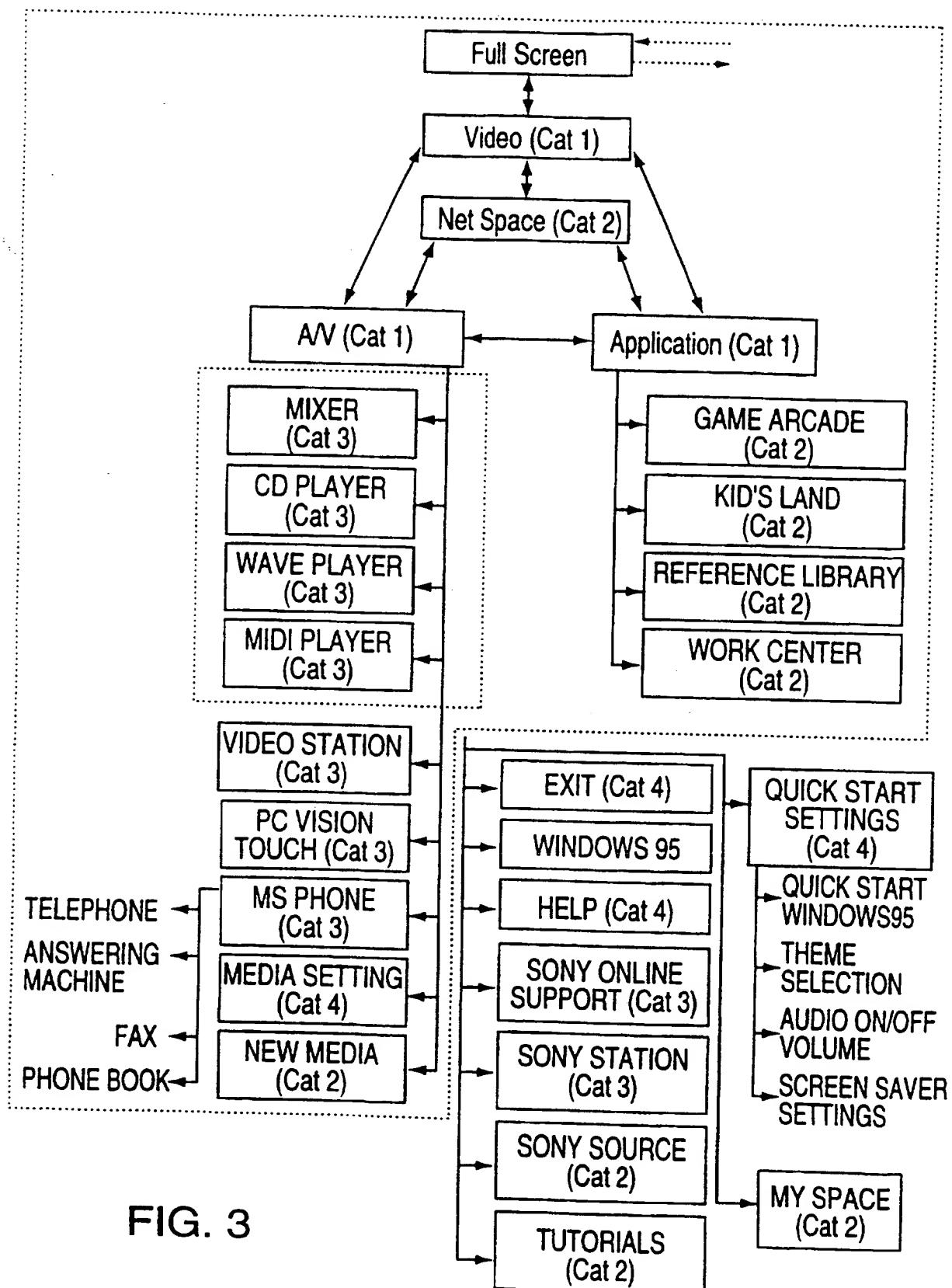


FIG. 3

4/26

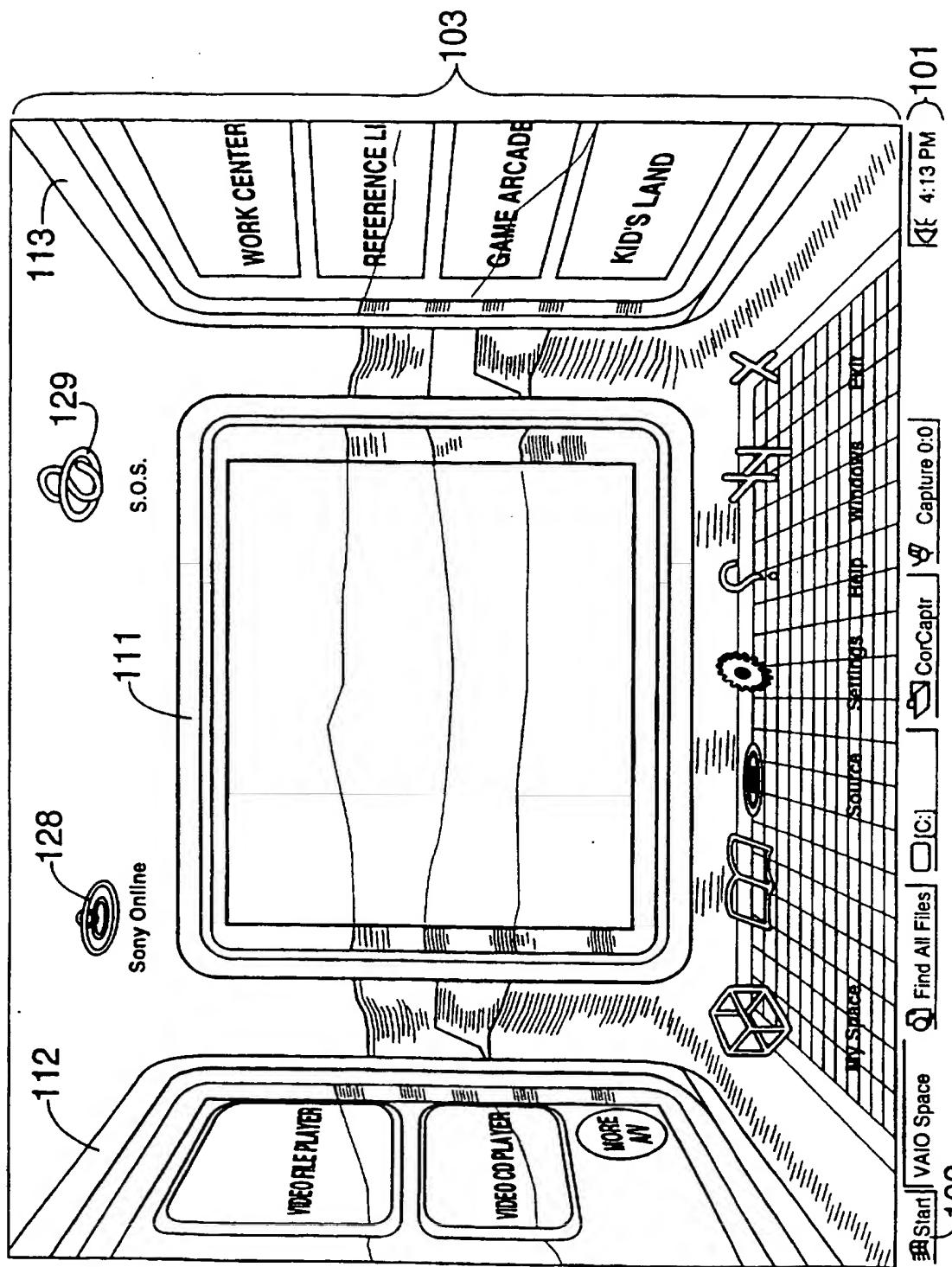
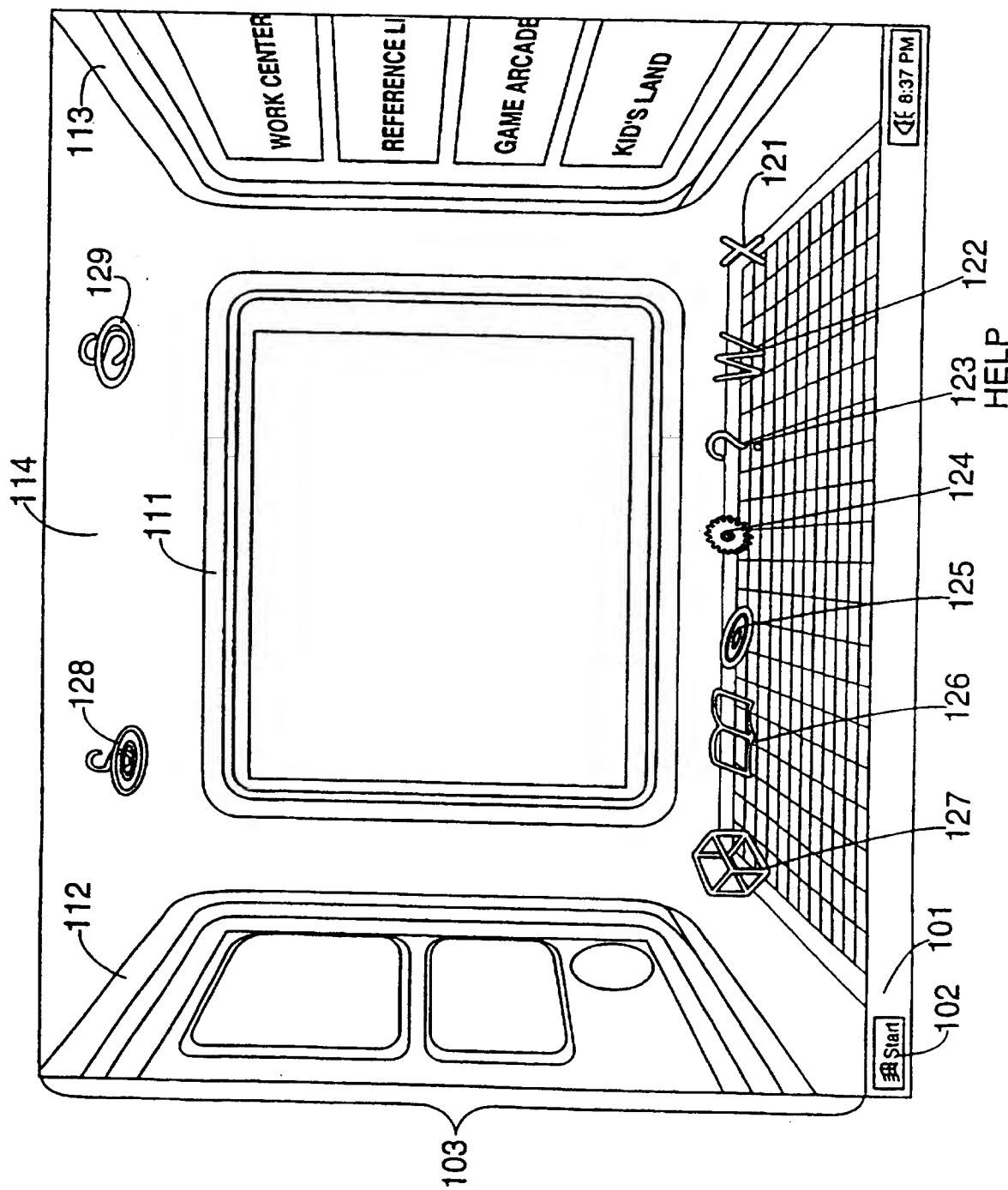


FIG. 4A

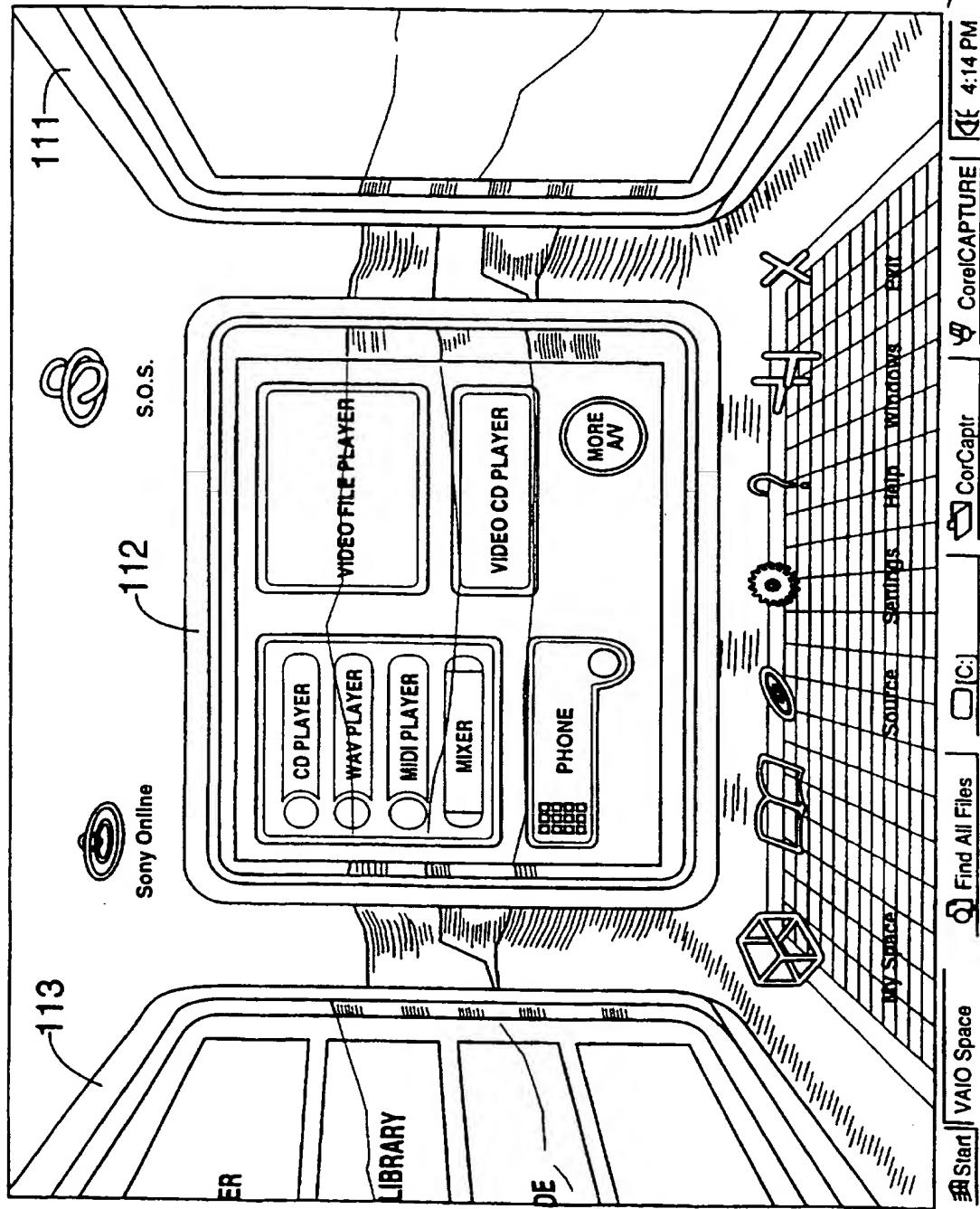
5/26

FIG. 4B



6/26

FIG. 5



7/26

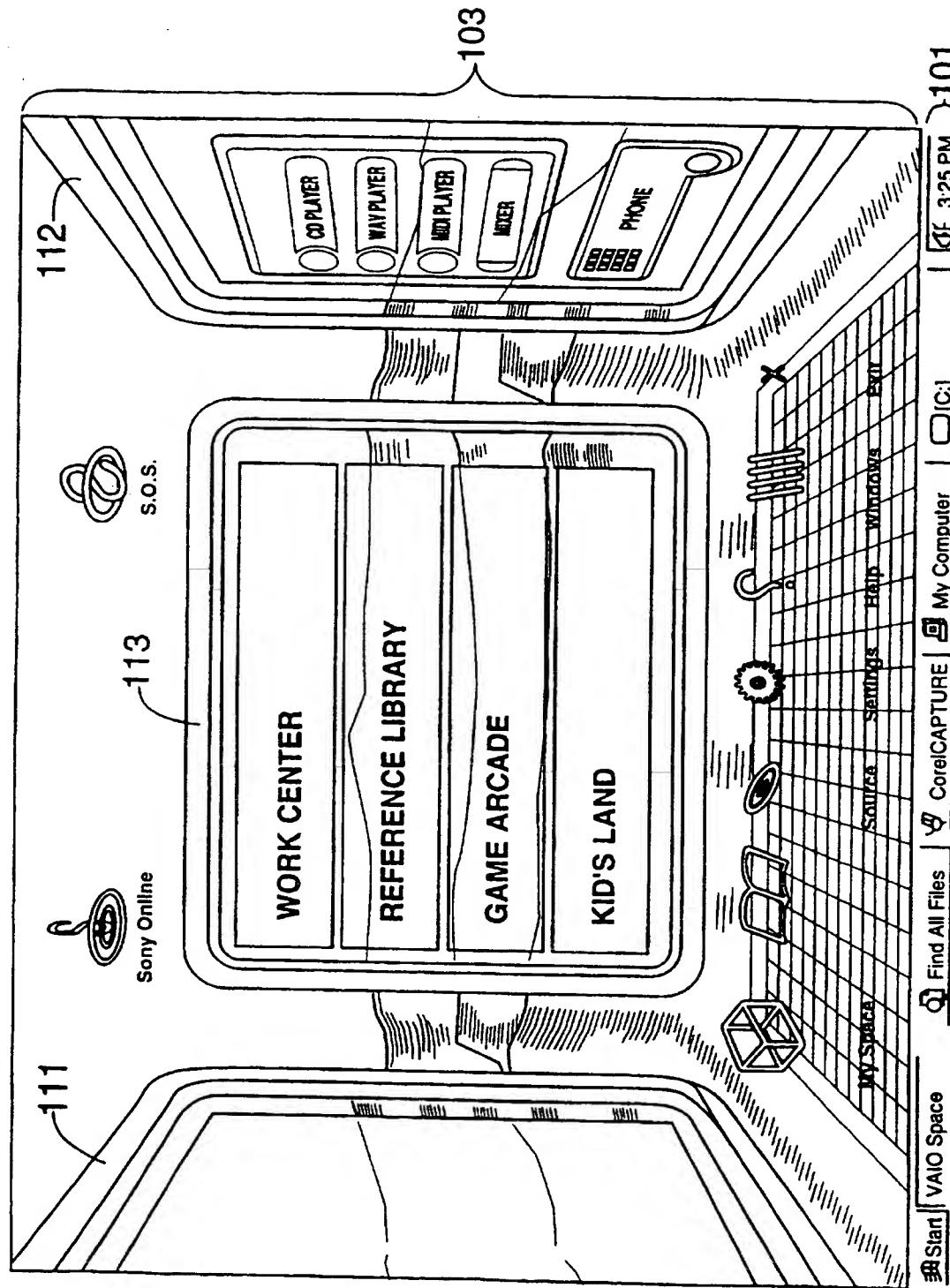


FIG. 6A

8/26

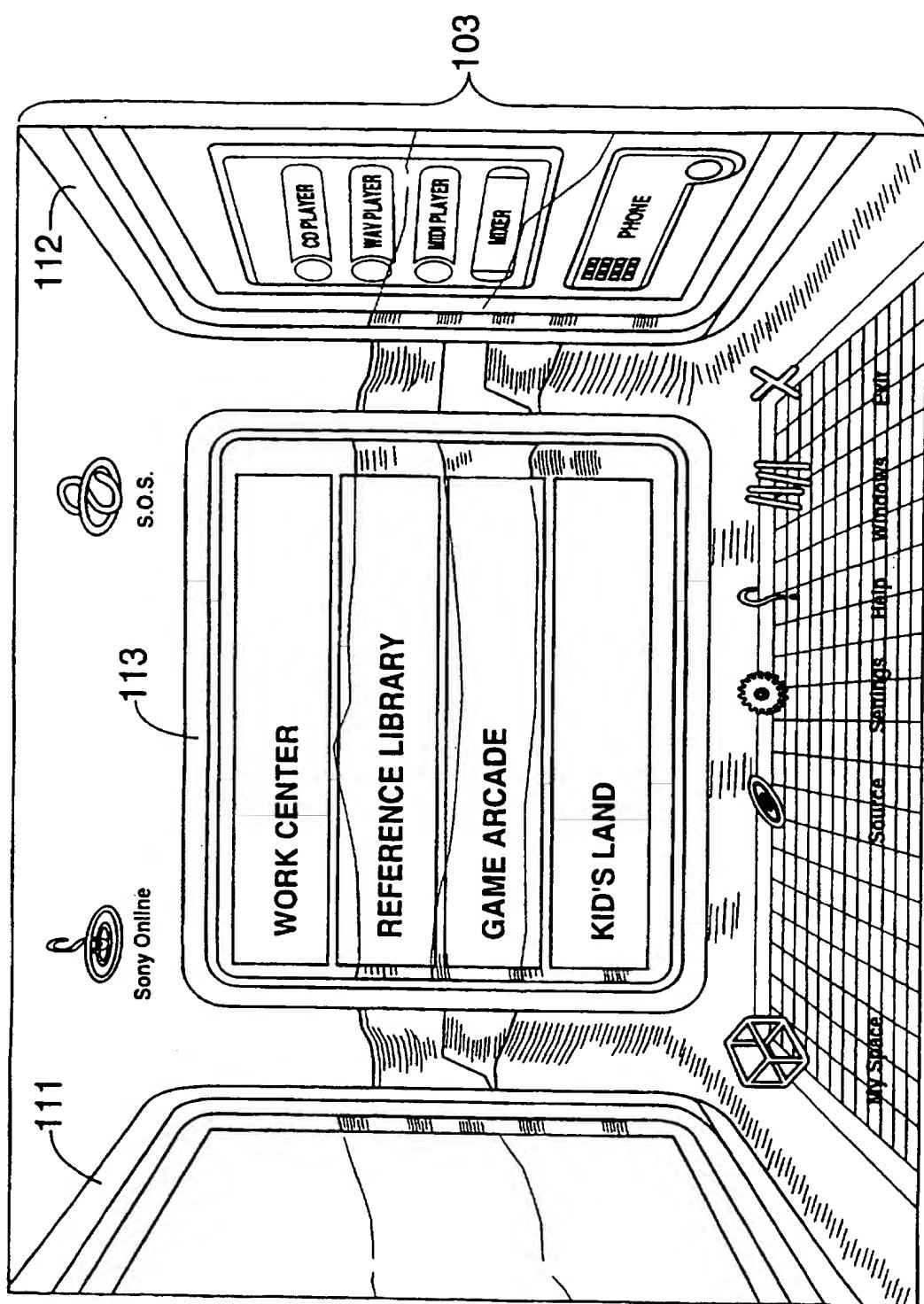
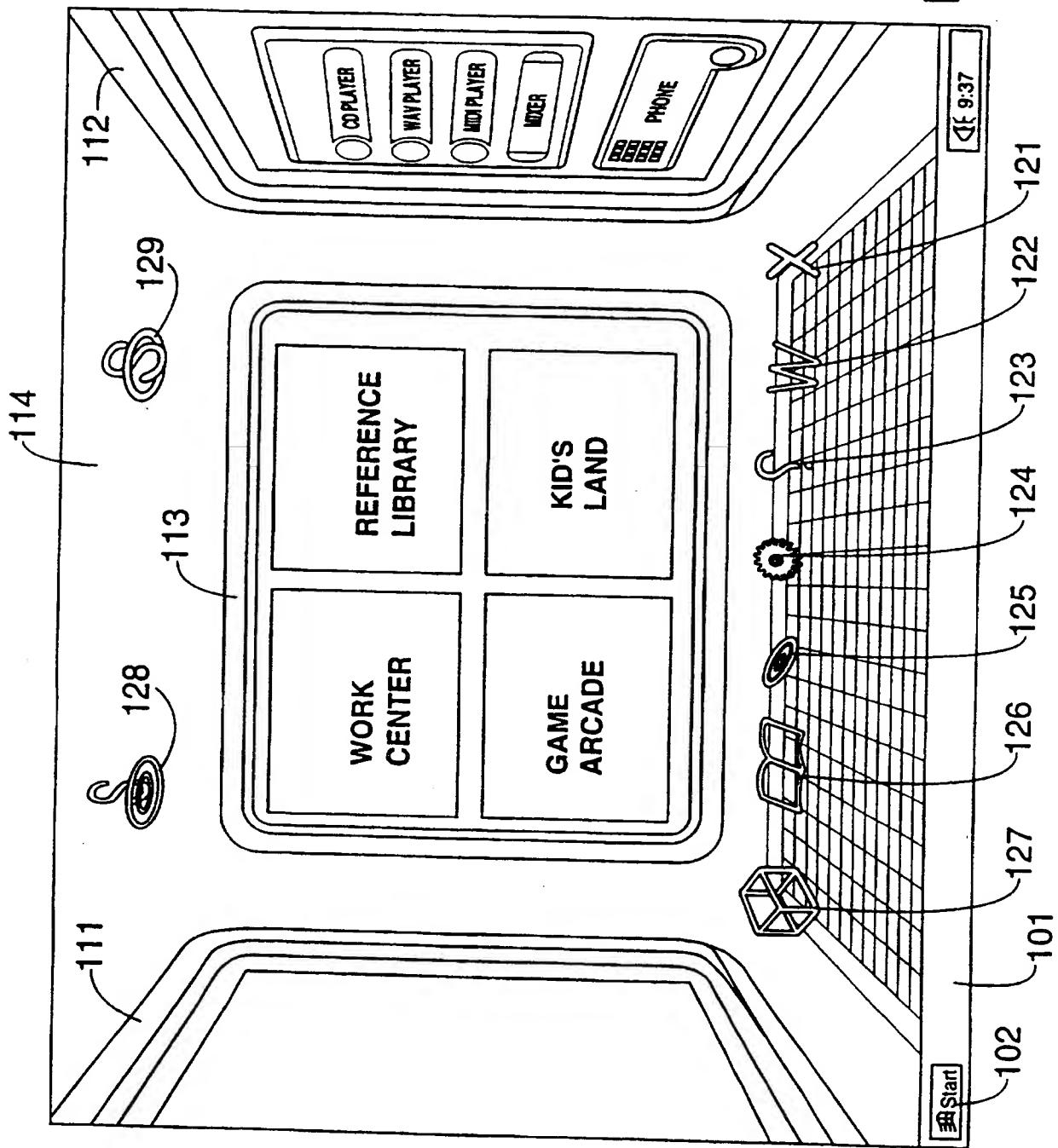


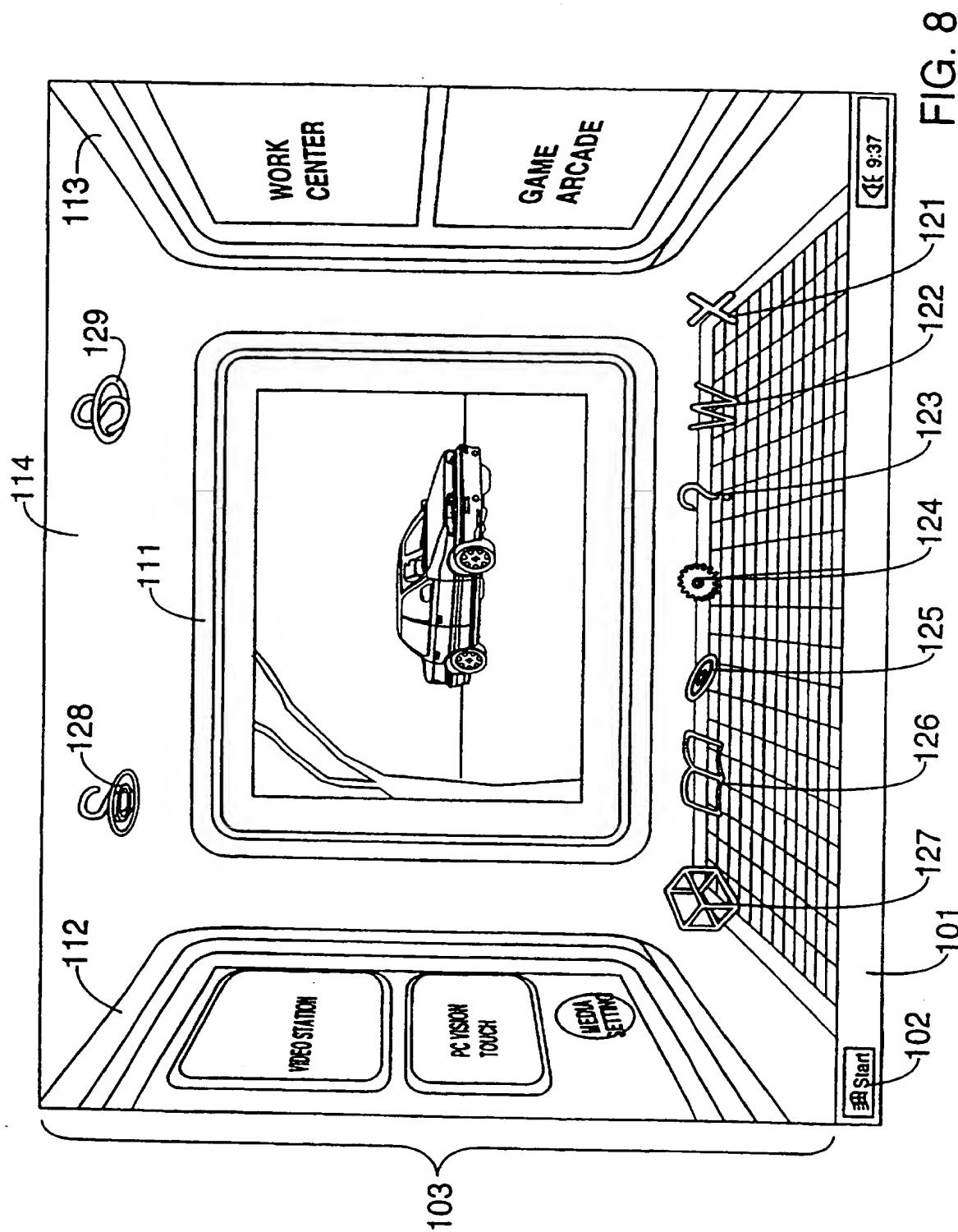
FIG. 6B

9/26

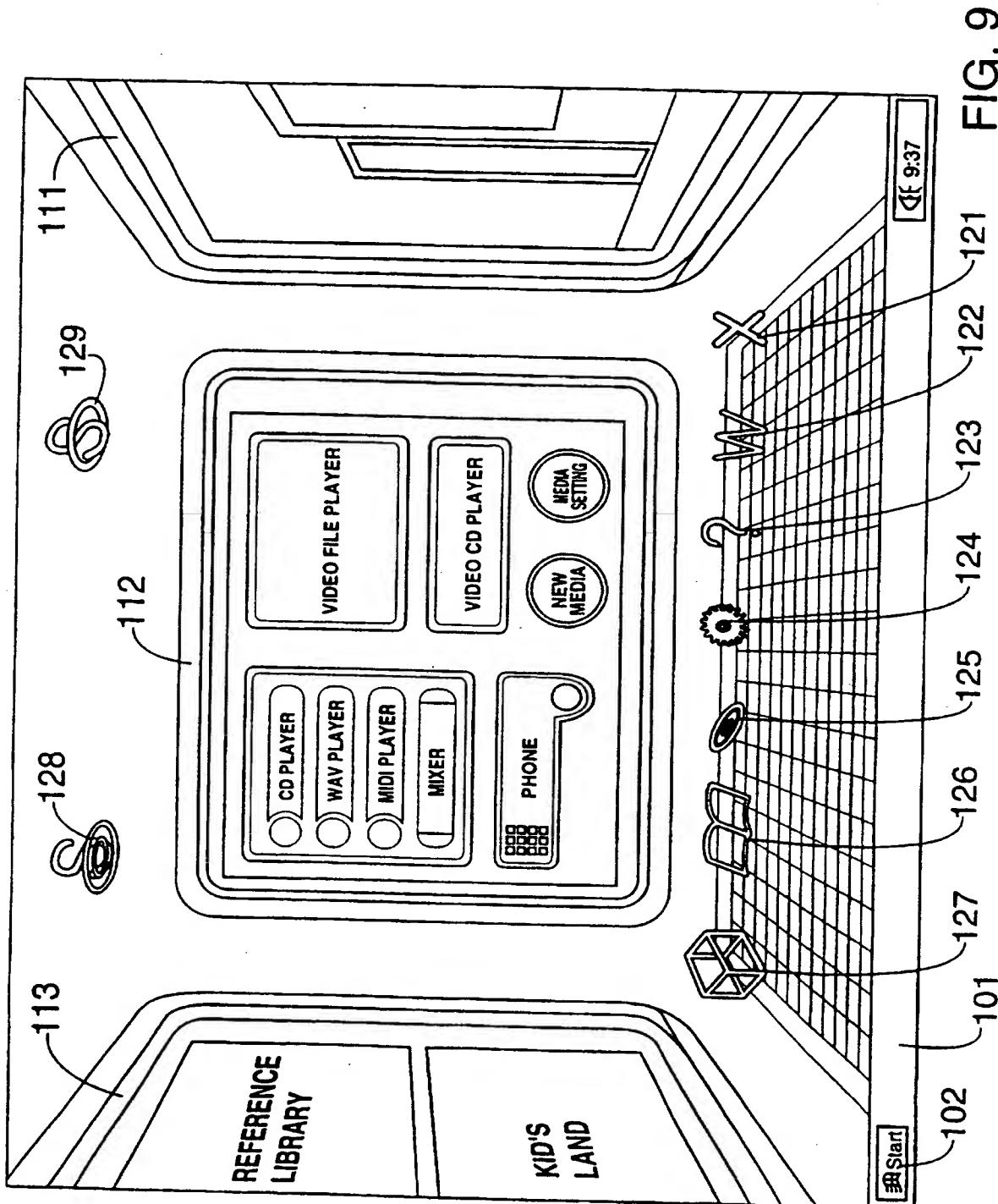
FIG. 7



10/26

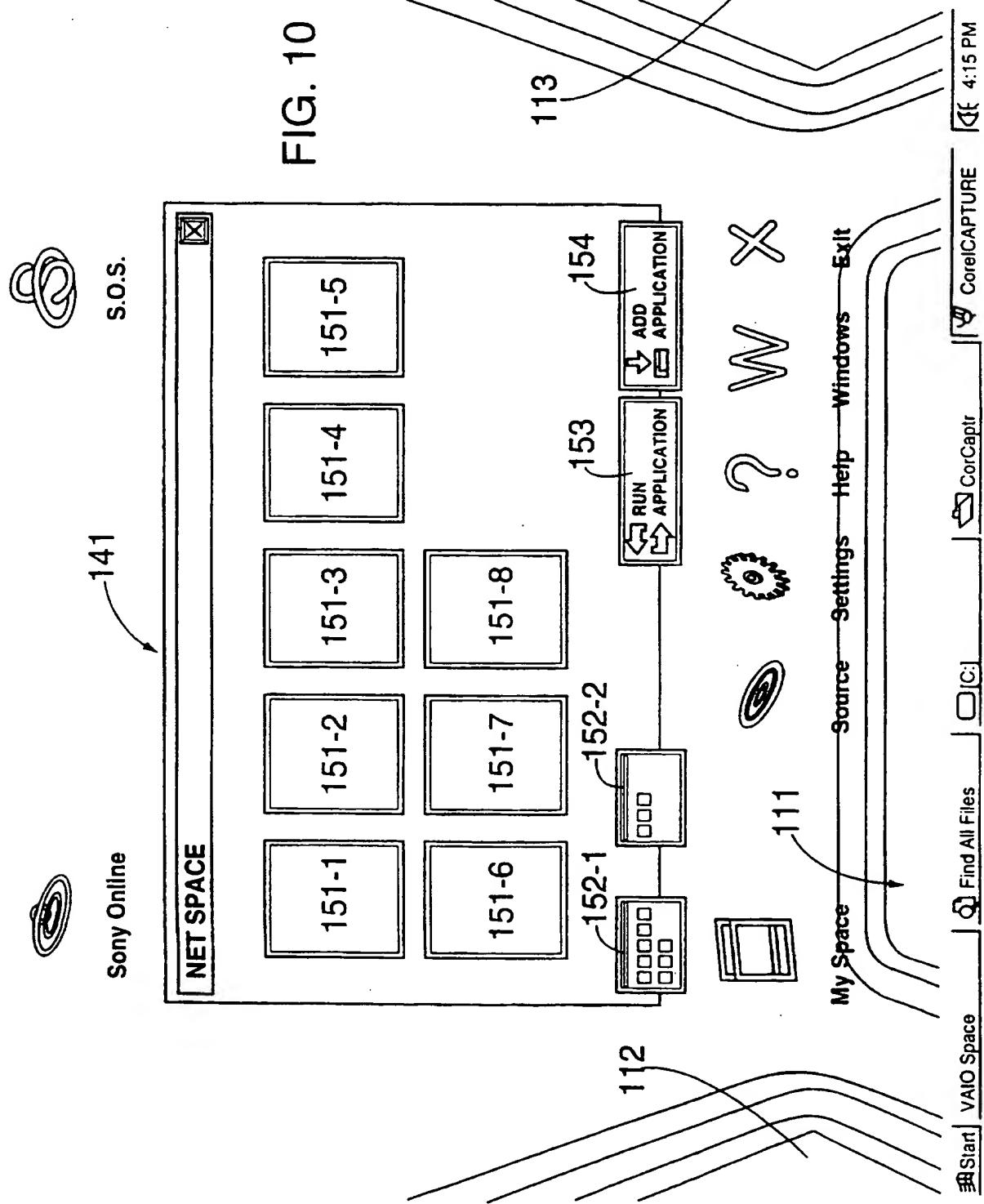


11/26



12/26

FIG. 10



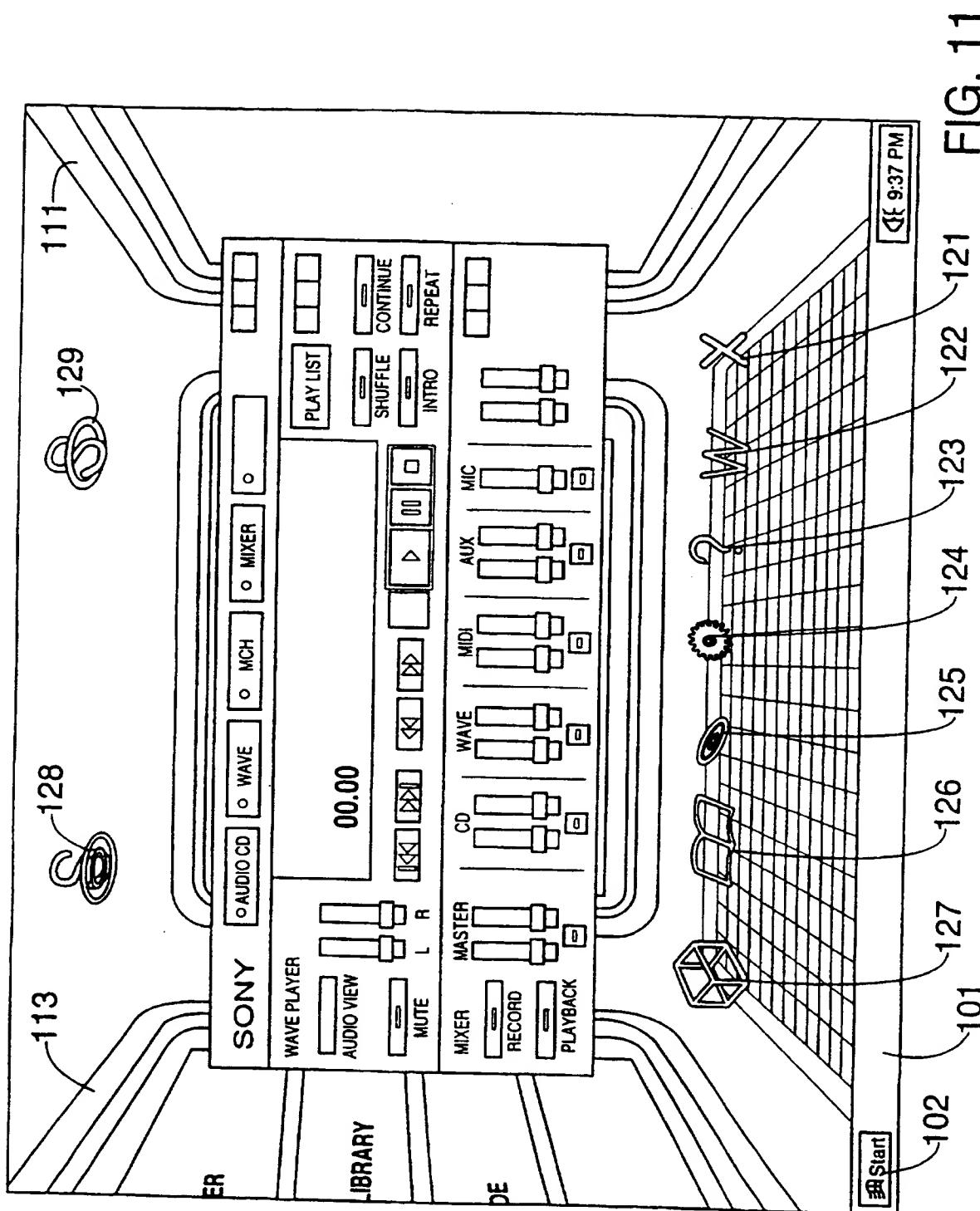
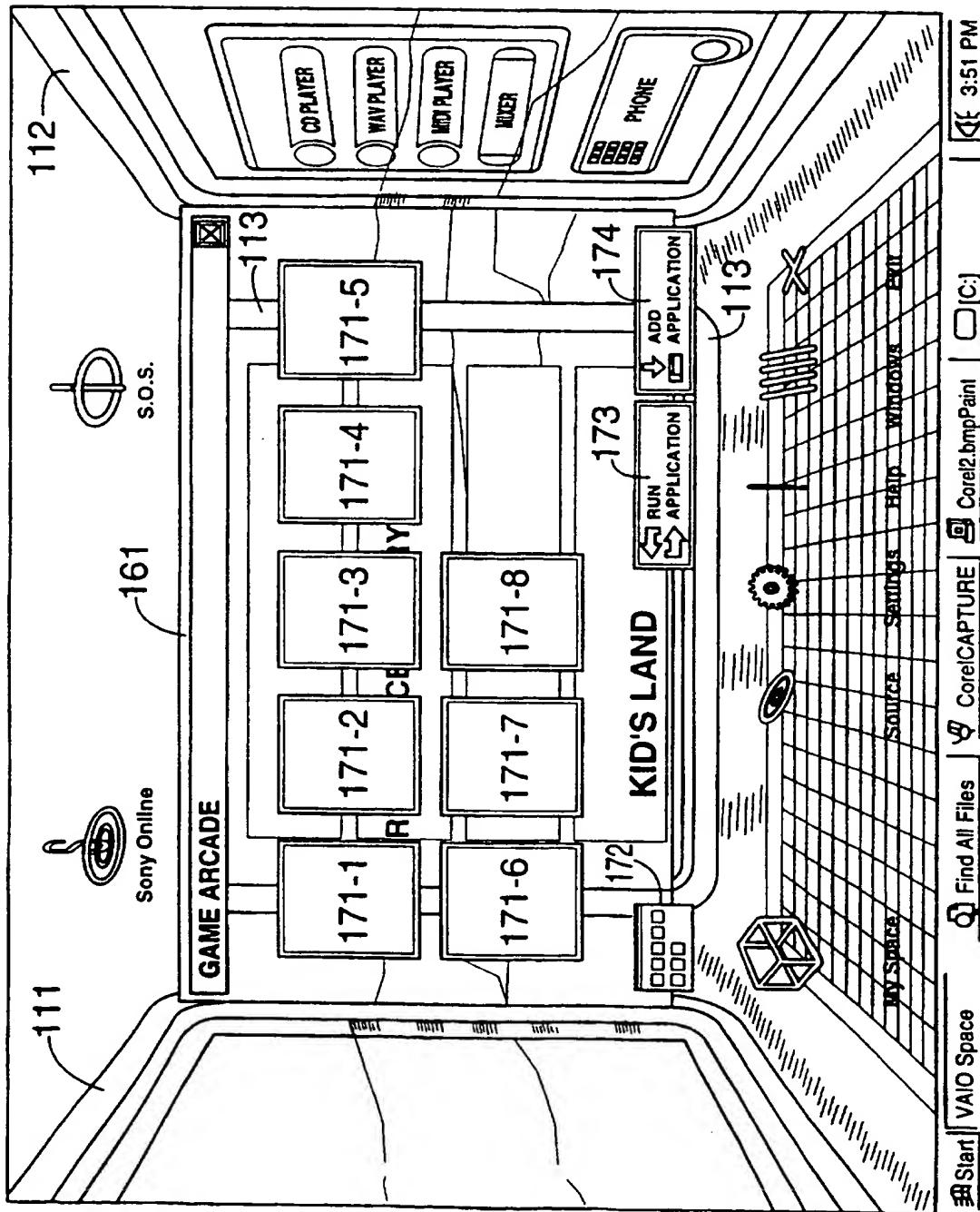


FIG. 12



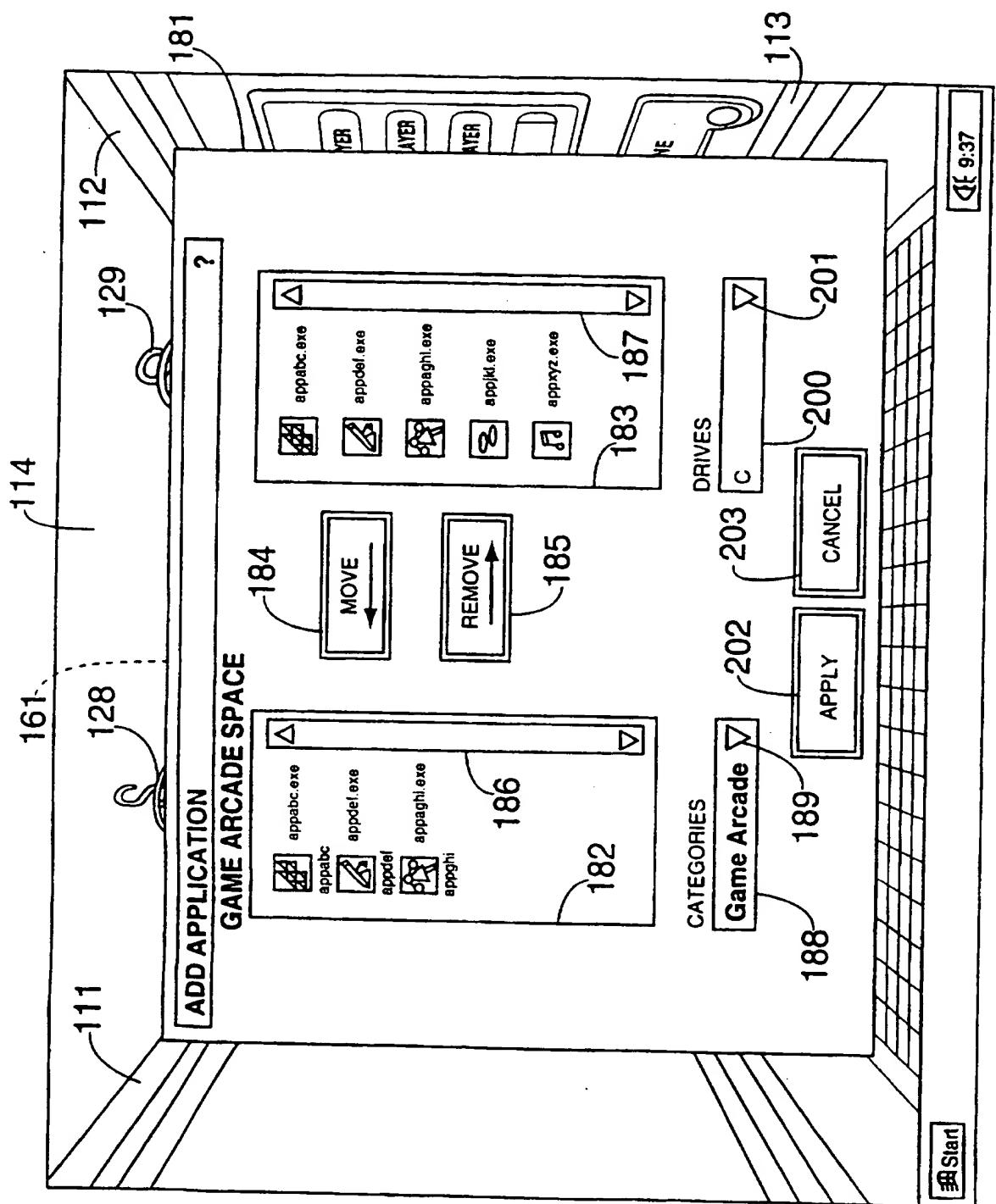


FIG. 13

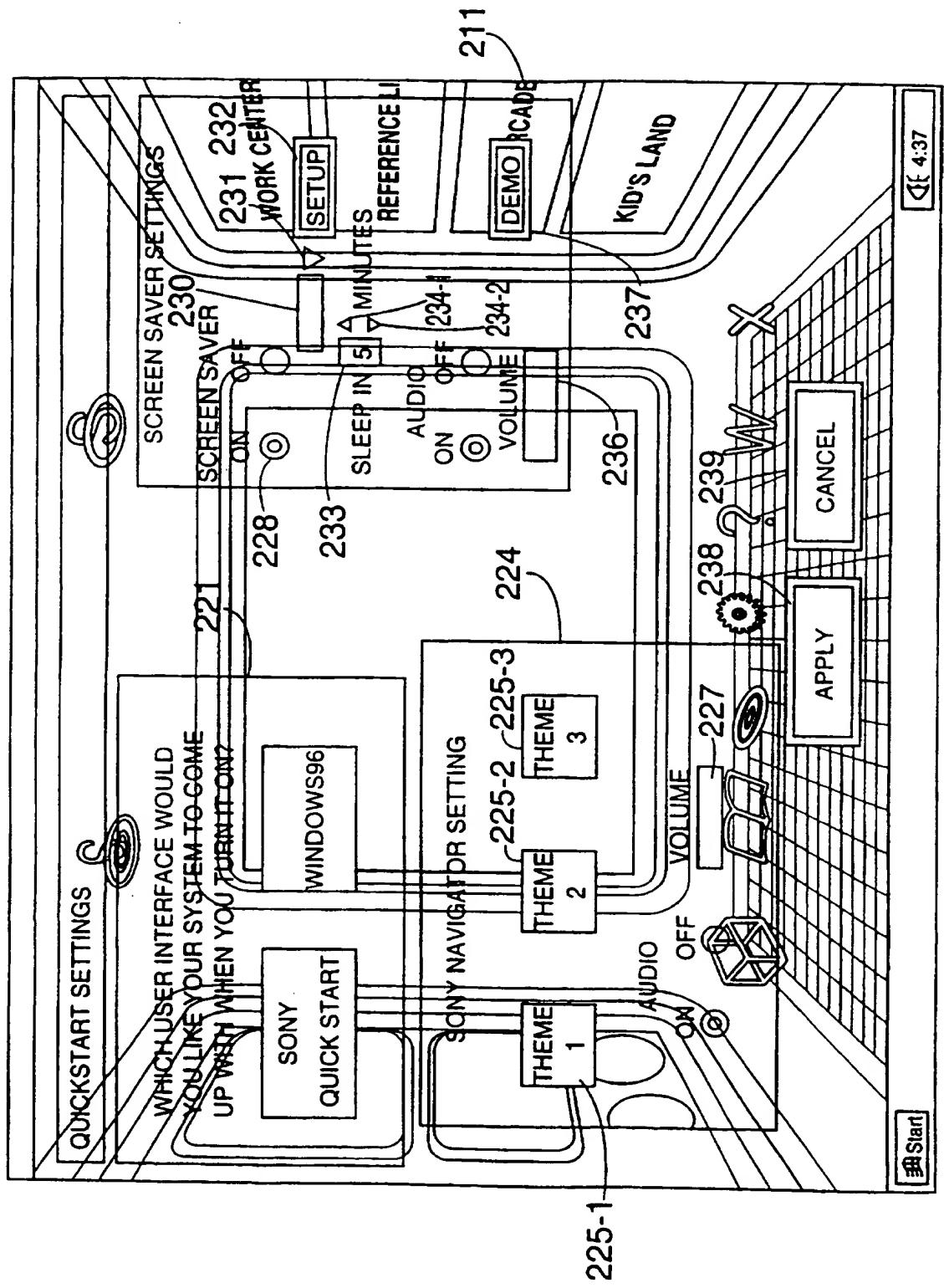
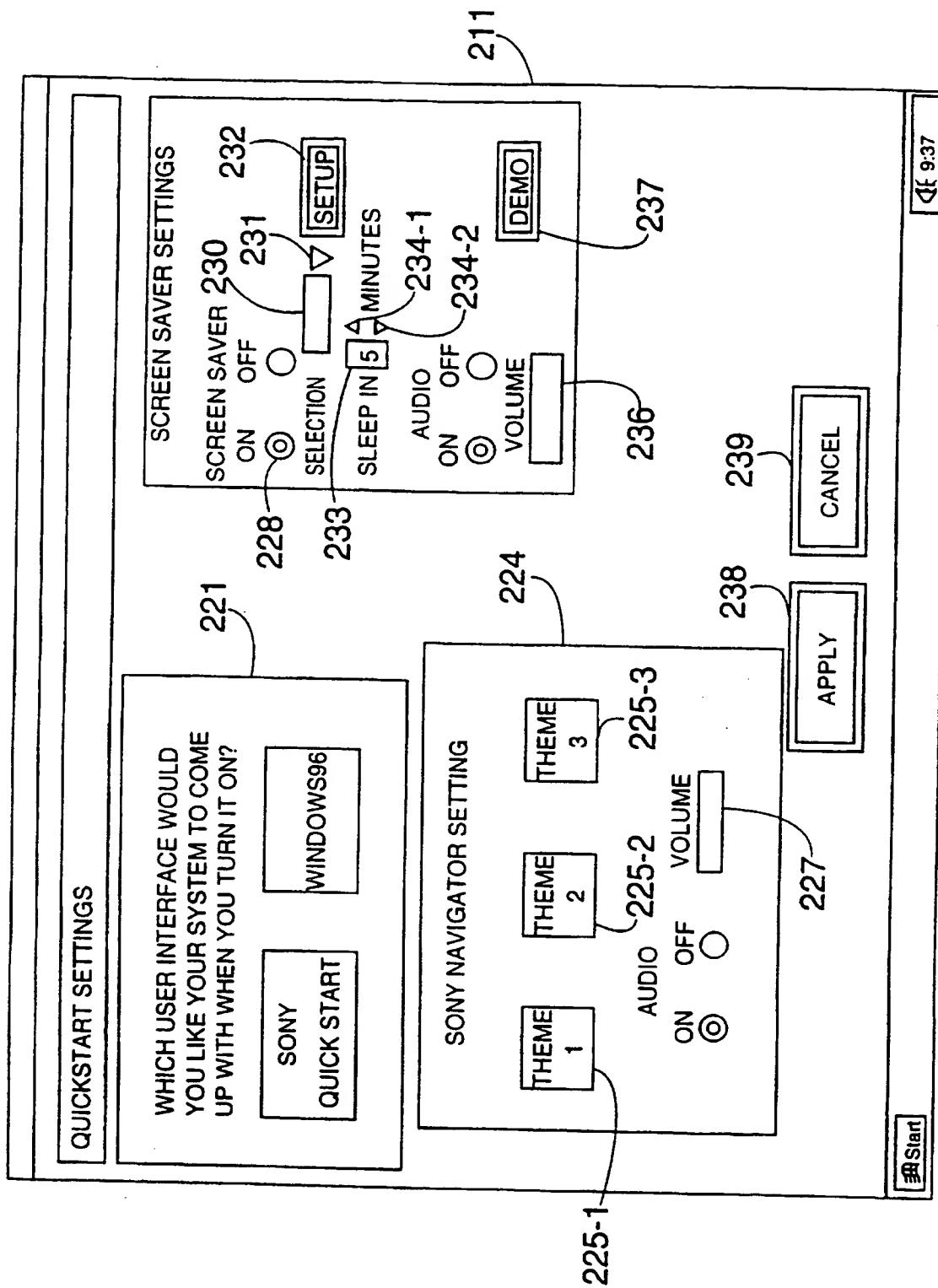


FIG. 14A



18/26

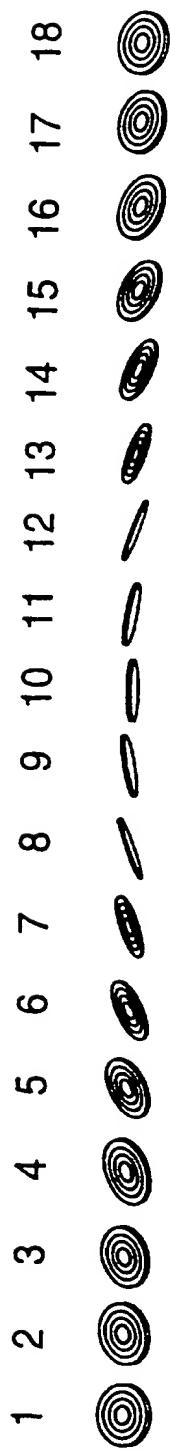


FIG. 15

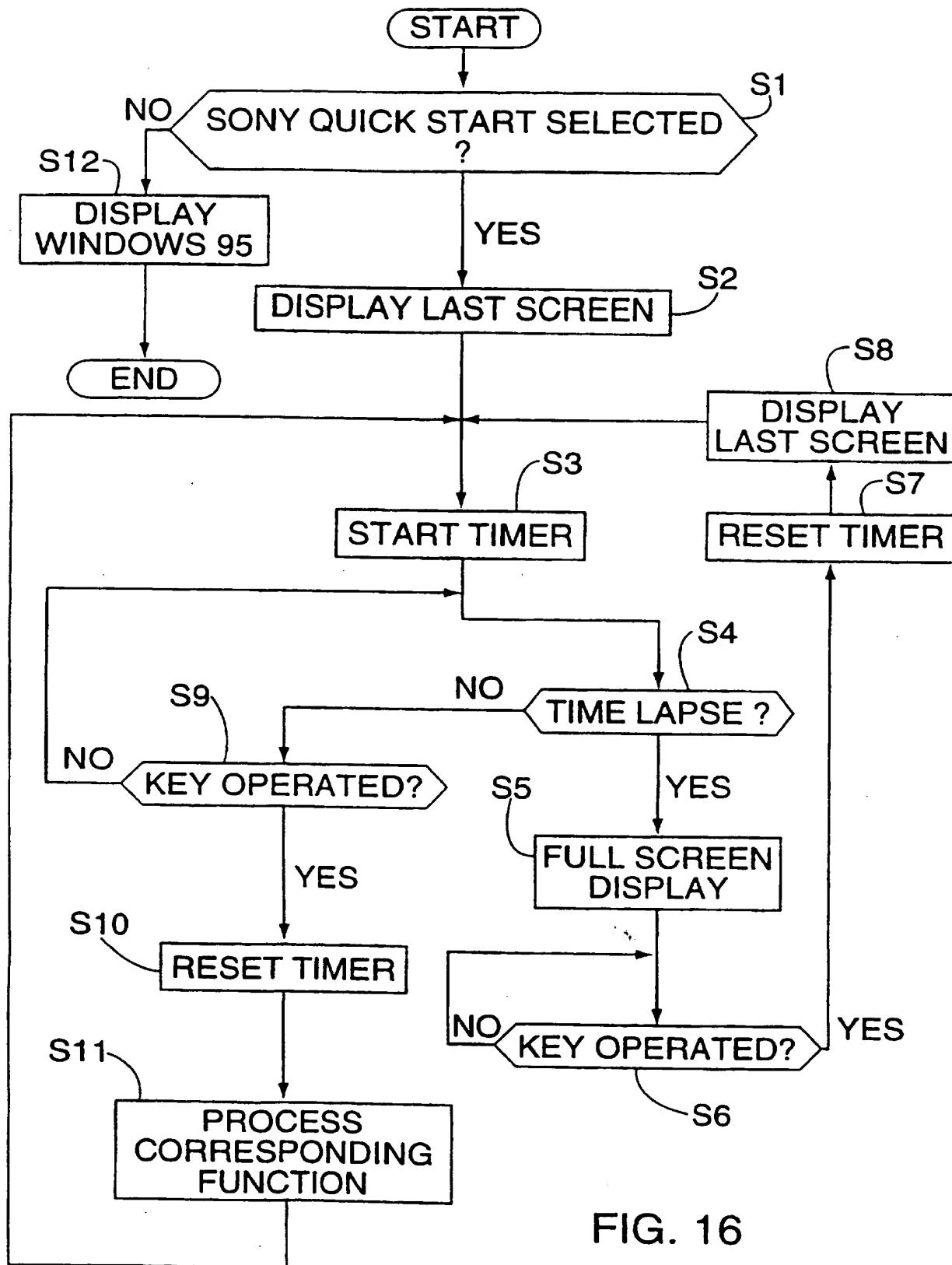


FIG. 16

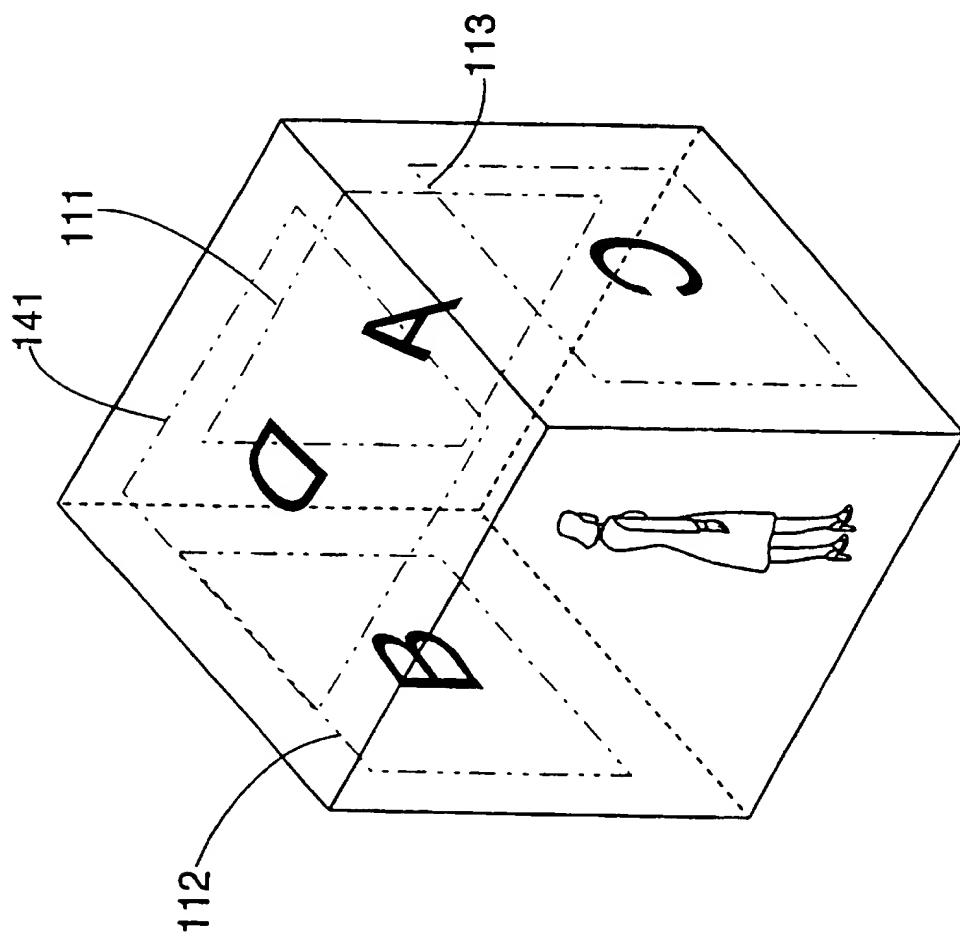


FIG. 17

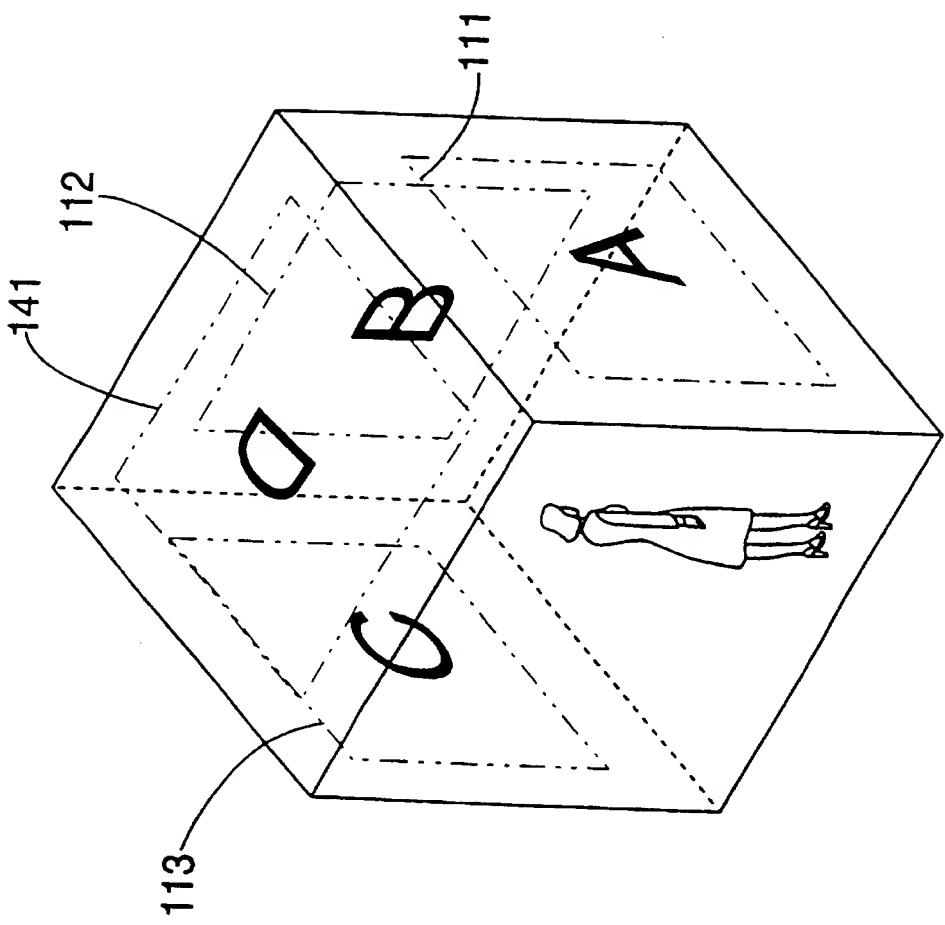


FIG. 18

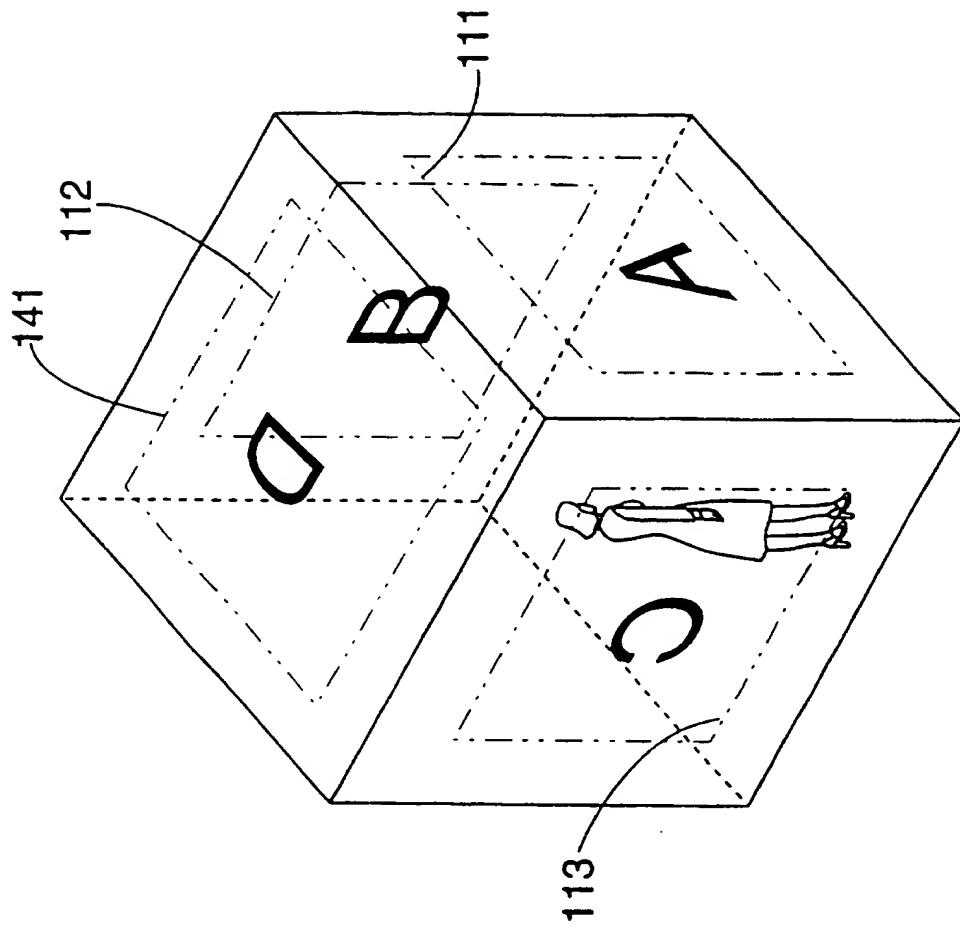


FIG. 19

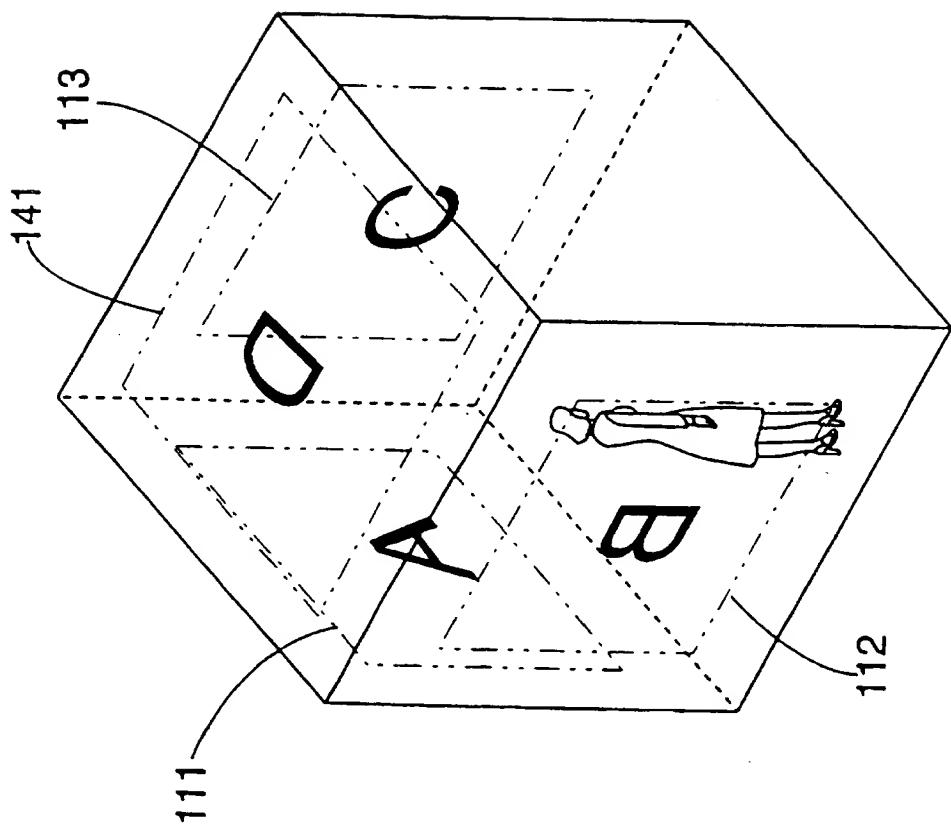


FIG. 20

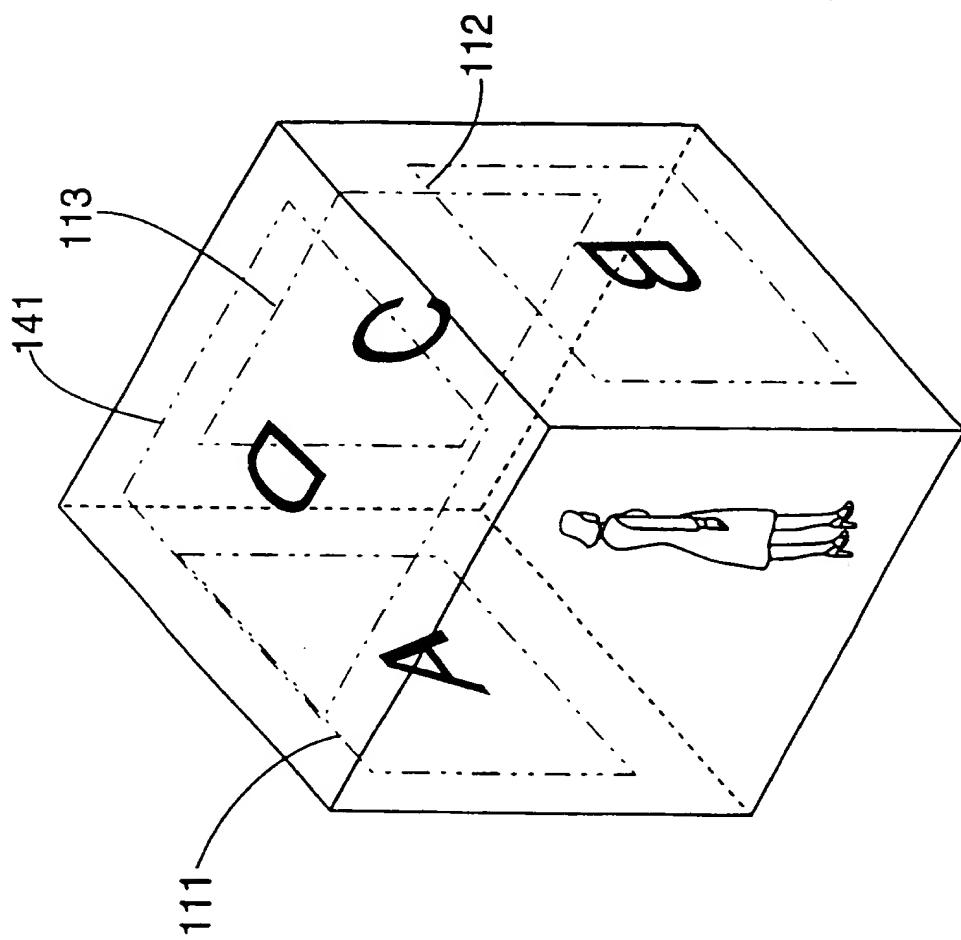


FIG. 21

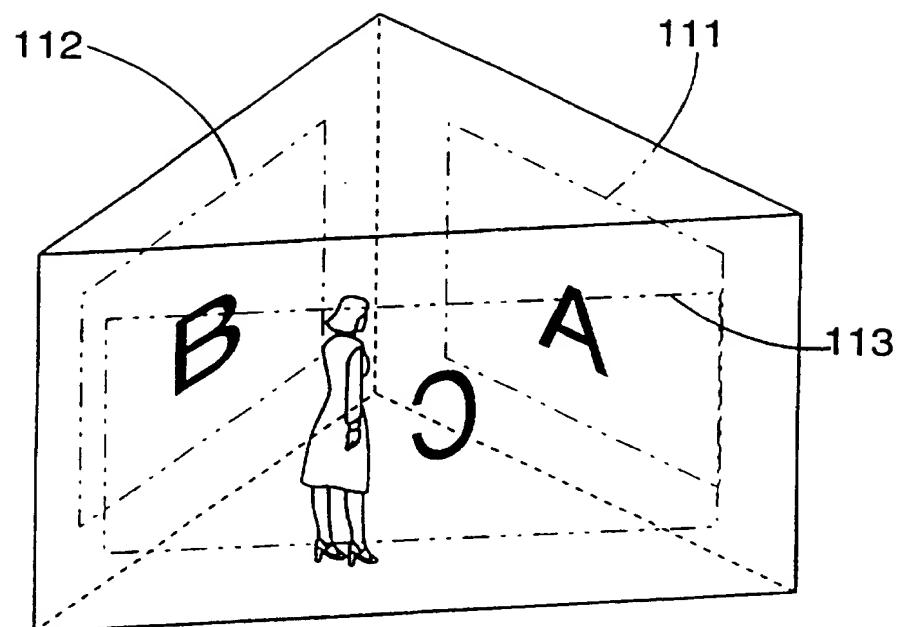


FIG. 22

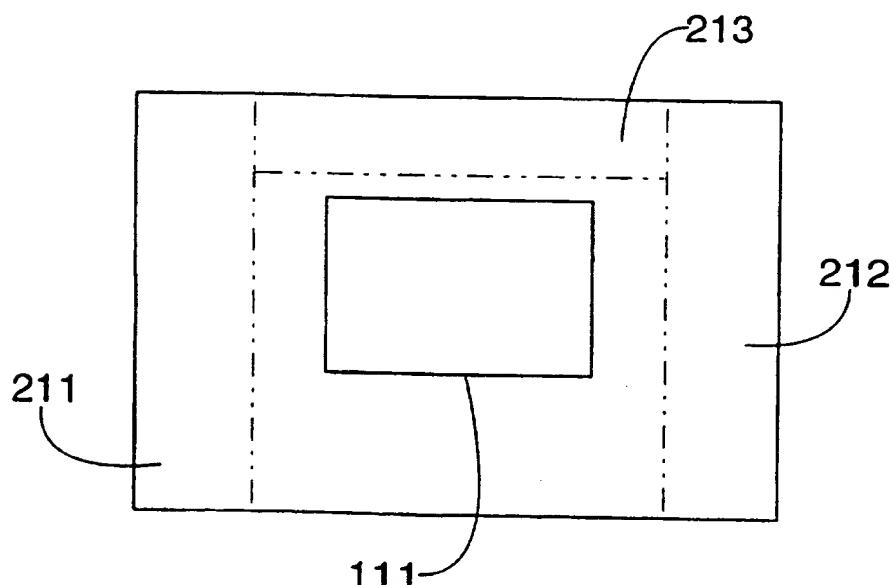
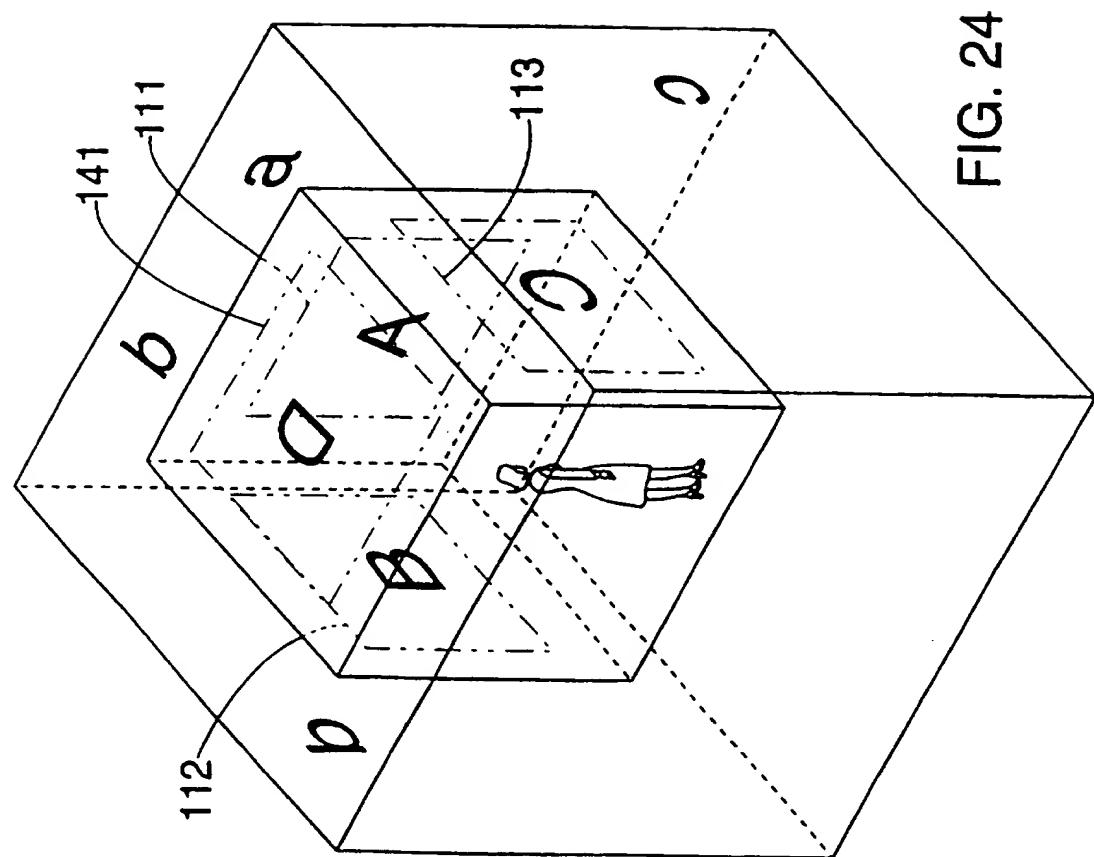


FIG. 23



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US97/07021

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :G06F 3/00
US CL :395/355

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 395/355, 348, 349

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS

search terms: three dimensional icons, rotating, shadow

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,303,388 A (KREITMAN ET AL.) 12 APRIL 1994, FIGS. 4A-7B.	1-6
Y	US 5,485,197 A (HOARTY) 16 JANUARY 1996, FIGS. 38-39.	1-6
Y	US 5,295,243 A (ROBERTSON ET AL.) 15 MARCH 1994, COLS. 12-13.	4
Y	MICROSOFT WINDOWS FOR WORKGROUPS V3.11, MICROSOFT CORP., 1993, SCREEN DUMPS 1-4.	1-6

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

See patent family annex.

Special categories of cited documents:	*T*	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	
E	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*X*
L	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*Y*
O	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	*&*
P	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

12 JUNE 1997

Date of mailing of the international search report

28 JUL 1997

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231

Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer

JOHN BREENE

Telephone No. (703) 305-3800